

FURTHER LETTERS  
OF  
QUEEN VICTORIA





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QUEEN VICTORIA

From the Archives of the  
House of Brandenburg-Prussia

*Translated from the German by*  
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# CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	FOREWORD . . . . .	
	PREFACE . . . . .	
I	1841-1849 . . . . .	1
II	1849-1851 . . . . .	16
III	1852-1854 . . . . .	26
IV	1854-1855 . . . . .	42
V	1855-1856 . . . . .	57
VI	1856-1857 . . . . .	77
VII	1857-1859 . . . . .	92
VIII	1859-1860 . . . . .	108
IX	1861 . . . . .	114
X	1861-1862 . . . . .	120
XI	1863 . . . . .	131
XII	1863-1865 . . . . .	138
XIII	1865-1867 . . . . .	156
XIV	1868-1869 . . . . .	165
XV	1870-1871 . . . . .	170
XVI	1871-1873 . . . . .	185
XVII	1873-1874 . . . . .	195
XVIII	1874-1876 . . . . .	204
XIX	1876-1878 . . . . .	215
XX	1878 . . . . .	227
XXI	1879 . . . . .	234

# CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
XXII	1880-1882 . . . . .	240
XXIII	1883-1884 . . . . .	249
XXIV	1887-1888 . . . . .	259
XXV	1889 . . . . .	271

## FOREWORD

I WISH to thank Dr. Kurt Jagow for his guidance in selecting these letters from the collection in the Charlottenburg archives.

My debt to the official selection of Queen Victoria's letters published by John Murray is considerable : also to Sir Sidney Lee's biography of King Edward VII.

My thanks are also due to Mr. Desmond Hawkins, whose help in preparing a large number of the notes amounts almost to collaboration.

I have taken certain liberties with the translations of these letters. Occasional phrases were originally written in English or French, but I have not thought it necessary to indicate these by notes. I have presumed to think that a burden of footnotes and explanations would not make the book any more interesting to the average reader.

H. B.

Boytons,  
Hempstead,  
September 10th, 1937.

## PREFACE

UP to 1921, when Lytton Strachey's "Queen Victoria" was published, most people thought of Queen Victoria as a dull, domineering woman who had ruled a prudish and hypocritical century. To be easily shocked was to be "Victorian"; the very word became an effective and protean term of abuse in any clash of ideas. Many older people, who had served the Queen or known her, were aware of her greatness; but they had no voice in the new century. One of the perquisites of the young is a licence to sneer at yesterday's glories, and the Edwardians and Georgians exploited this to the full. Lytton Strachey's conversion was the beginning of a change. He admitted that he began his book "Queen Victoria" with cynical doubts and that he ended it in a state of respect and praise. From this time, the public conception of Queen Victoria slowly changed. Jokes were still made about the horse-hair sofas, the aspidistras, the wax flowers and the gew-gaws with which Victorian rooms were furnished, but it was conceded that the men and women who lived in them were more than censorious hypocrites. People began to recognise the character of the Victorians and of the Queen who had dominated them through the greater part of a century.

The fairest estimate of the Queen's achievement is made in the light of all that went before her. When she came to the throne in 1837, the Crown was despised

## PREFACE

by many. A succession of selfish kings (with the exception of George III, whose private virtues were nevertheless qualified by his public mistakes) had widened the gulf between the throne and the people. When Queen Victoria inherited the Crown it was an object devoid of romance, dignity and authority. When she passed it on to her son, at the close of the century, the same Crown was the venerated symbol of control over the greatest empire in history.

After Lytton Strachey's book appeared, people grew to understand the true achievement of the Victorians, and they became more interested in the life and character of the Queen, more willing to recognise her great qualities of character. Lytton Strachey's book was read by millions of those whose ideas on the subject had hitherto been patronising and superficial. The library of Victoriana grew quickly. Several volumes of Queen Victoria's letters had already been published, to prove her influence and diligence as a correspondent. Other books followed, and by degrees, the memoirs and letters of Victorian courtiers and statesmen, the graceful plays of Mr. Laurence Housman, and my own discovery of the Prince Consort's letters in the archives of Coburg, contributed to a full and balanced knowledge of the woman who had for so long been dismissed as a stuffy moralist. New letters throwing light upon the years of her reign were read with sympathy, and today, any fresh evidence which helps towards fuller comprehension of Queen Victoria's life is regarded as interesting as well as important.

No fresh store of Victorian letters has been as valuable as those used in this book, since the Duke of Saxe-

## PREFACE

Coburg allowed me to use the correspondence of Prince Albert in my biography, "Albert the Good," published six years ago. Among the papers preserved in the Charlottenburg archives were about two hundred letters written by Queen Victoria to members of the Prussian Royal Family. These were not included in the important volumes published by John Murray, and they now appear in England for the first time, with the consent of the Prussian authorities and the gracious permission of H.M. King George VI, who holds the copyright of letters written by his great-grandmother.

H. B.



# FURTHER LETTERS OF QUEEN VICTORIA

## CHAPTER I

1841-1849

THE royal families of England and Prussia were drawn more closely together during Queen Victoria's reign by the marriage of her daughter, Princess Victoria, to Prince Frederick William, afterwards the Emperor Frederick III. Queen Victoria was able to write with confidence and affection to the Empress Augusta ; and afterwards, with authority and frankness, to her grandson, the Emperor William II. It is this intimacy which gives the new letters their chief value, strengthening our conception of Queen Victoria's character and tastes. They also intensify the domestic theme, which is so important to an understanding of the power of the royal family during the past hundred years. This domestic theme began with the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Their happiness and understanding had not been won easily. The marriage had begun with many difficulties, and the final peace and harmony were gained through a battle of character. When she came to the throne, Queen Victoria had a "great repugnance to change", and when Prince Albert came to see her, she was afraid of all the complications their betrothal would

bring. She had been a prisoner for so long under her mother's authority that she dreaded a new bond, even with a Prince for whom she had already declared her devotion. "I am very anxious", she wrote, when he was coming to England, "that it should be understood that I am not guilty of any breach of promise, for I never gave any".

Her fears passed when she saw him at Windsor. "It was with some emotion that I beheld Albert", she wrote, and later when she had proposed to him and when their betrothal was announced, she wrote in ecstasy, "He is perfection in every way, in beauty, everything". Nevertheless, she was far from being enslaved by Albert's eminent qualities. She was willing to welcome him as a husband, but she was deeply afraid of any interference with her rights as Queen; indeed it seems from the letters written at the time that she never contemplated any co-operation with him whatsoever, as far as affairs of State were concerned. Prince Albert was depressed when he returned to Coburg, between the days of their betrothal, and their marriage in February of 1840. "My future lot is high and brilliant but also plentifully strewn with thorns", he wrote to his stepmother. There were letters from Queen Victoria almost every day to remind him of the limitations which she intended to put upon him. When he suggested the pleasures of their quiet life at Windsor, she answered, "I am sovereign", and added that the business of being queen could "stop and wait for nothing". "Dear Albert", she wrote, "you have not at all understood the matter . . . it is impossible for me to be absent from London".

He came to England knowing that if his marriage was to be happy he would need patience with which to change the thoughts and remould the character of the woman who was to be his wife.

All these difficulties are apparent in the story of the first year of their marriage. Queen Victoria had written, during the time of the engagement, "I have always had my own way. . . . Suppose he should endeavour to thwart me and oppose me in what I like, what a dreadful thing it would be". It was thus that they began and, in spite of the delight which came to her with her first experience of marriage, she did not relent as far as her sovereign rights were concerned. "I am only the husband and not the master in the house", Prince Albert complained in a letter to a friend in Germany. The difficulties persisted. He was not allowed in the room when she received her Ministers, and with all his gifts, his wisdom and his virtue, he had to confine his life to the domestic side for many months before his own qualities broke down the Queen's stubbornness, so that she allowed him to guide her and to impose his own calm judgment upon her waywardness and fears.

Queen Victoria was always ready to admit mistakes and she was generous with appreciation. When the change came; when she realised that her own character and talents were dependent upon her husband, in government as well as in family affairs, she made a characteristic gesture. She urged the Regency Bill upon Parliament, and it was passed. At last Prince Albert's position was established and he was able to write to his brother, "In case of Victoria's death and

her successor being under eighteen years of age, I am to be Regent—*alone* Regent, without a Council ". This was his first victory. It brightened every aspect of his life and, sitting in a room with two desks, the Queen at one and himself at the other, he was able to write the happy sentence to his brother, " I wish you could be here and see in us, a couple joined in love and unanimity. Now Victoria is also ready to give up something for my sake, I everything for her sake. Become as happy as we are, more I cannot wish you ". Later he wrote, " A married couple must be chained to one another, be inseparable, and they must live for one another ".

There are no documents in the Charlottenburg archives to give us new light upon this first year of Queen Victoria's marriage and we have to wait until the birth of her second child, afterwards King Edward VII, before there are letters in which she shared her happiness with the royal family in Prussia. Her first daughter, Princess Victoria, afterwards the Empress Frederick, had been born in November, 1840. " Albert, father of a daughter ", the Prince wrote to his brother, " you will laugh at me ". Queen Victoria had been satisfied with one child and she wrote to her uncle, King Leopold, of the " great inconvenience of a *large* family ", adding, " Men never think, at least seldom think, what a hard task it is for us women to go through this *very often* ". In less than a year, however, there were signs that her second child was to be born, and Prince Albert wrote in March to his brother, " It will interest you to hear that we are expecting an increase of our family ". He added, " Victoria is not very happy about it ".

When the child was born, a son, to take his place as heir to the throne, England's happiness was reflected in the Queen and she accepted the congratulations and the prayers of her country with grace and pleasure. The first letter of interest in the Charlottenburg collection was written by Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia when he consented to come to England with his Queen, to attend the christening. The letter is no more than a personal note of welcome, but it began the important association between the two sovereigns. Queen Victoria wrote :

Windsor Castle.

December 12th, 1841.

Sire, my most honoured Brother,

These few words which I am venturing to write to you in German are only intended to repeat and to confirm what Albert has already conveyed to you, and to assure you how delighted I should be at this opportunity of making the personal acquaintance of Your Majesty and of the Queen.

In true friendship Your Majesty's sincerely devoted  
Sister

VICTORIA R.

Prince Albert Edward was christened towards the end of January, 1842, and, at the dinner which followed the service, Queen Victoria and the King of Prussia had their first intimate conversation. Baroness Bunsen was among the guests and she observed the demeanour of both sovereigns, the Queen "laughing heartily (no *company* laugh) at things which he said to entertain her". The King returned to Prussia confident that he had made friends of the Queen and Prince Albert.

The choice of the King of Prussia as one of the godfathers enraged Prince Albert's father, who had been passed over, but it gave "general satisfaction" in England. The birth of an heir to the throne is perhaps the one event which stirs even the most apathetic loyalty, and the Duke of Saxe-Coburg's pique was brushed aside in the general rejoicing. The baby was "a wonderfully strong and large child, with very large dark blue eyes, a finely formed but somewhat large nose, and a pretty little mouth". The Duke of Wellington carried the Sword of State at the ceremony; and the infant Prince of Wales "behaved so well" that everything, in the Queen's opinion, went off "perfectly and splendidly".

Three years later Queen Victoria paid a return visit to the King of Prussia. She had already formed a high opinion of her son's godfather, "a most amiable man, so kind and well-meaning". The visit to Germany seems to have given the Queen real pleasure. She had been married five and a half years, but she had never found the time to go to Germany and to Thuringia, where Prince Albert was born. They set off in August, by way of Belgium. They were to see King Leopold in Brussels, and in Brühl they were to be entertained by the King of Prussia. After these grand occasions were over, they were to enjoy what was almost a honeymoon, in the castle at Rosenau. "We do not expect any festivities", Prince Albert wrote to his brother, "we only wish to have an opportunity of seeing the neighbourhood and the family".

This was Queen Victoria's first long journey, and

she allowed Prince Albert to play the rôle of guide and historian, with delight. She saw the market women in Antwerp, she drove through the streets of Cologne, which had been sprinkled with eau-de-Cologne in celebration of her visit, and she went to Bonn, where Prince Albert had been a student nine years before. All was noted in her diary. It was at Brühl that she saw the King of Prussia once more, when "the nobility of all the country had gathered to honour them". When the toast "Victoria" was proposed, the King rang his glass against Albert's and the Queen's eyes were filled with tears. With the grace that always guided her at such times, she rose, bent towards the King and kissed his cheek.

In the middle of September, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were resting in the gardens of Osborne. She waited until then to write her thanks to the King.

Osborne.

September 14th, 1845.

Sire, my most honoured Brother,

Now that I am once again on English soil, I hasten to write a few lines to Your Majesty to express to you our sincere thanks for all the kindness and courtesy shown to us in Brühl and Stolzenfels and to assure you that the memory of our late journey will always remain very dear to me. Germany and its kindly folk delighted me—almost too much I fear! Above all I was pleased by the atmosphere of cordiality and "Gemuetlichkeit" (a word for which there is not even an equivalent in other languages); I did not feel in any way a stranger. Our whole expedition from beginning to end seemed to be under the special protection of Heaven, and we cannot be sufficiently grateful that not the smallest unpleasantness occurred.

It was a real pleasure to have seen Your Majesty surrounded by your charming family, and I beg you to remember me most kindly to the dear Queen and to all your relatives. Albert is your devoted servant, and I am, as always, in sincere friendship Your Majesty's devoted Sister

VICTORIA R.

The cordial relationship with the Prussian Court continued, and in 1847 the King of Prussia presented his English godson with an elaborately designed silver shield. This *Glaubensschild* (Shield of Faith) was cast in silver in Hossauer's Berlin workshop, to the drawing of Peter Cornelius. In the centre was a bust of the Saviour ; in the cross arms the Allegories, Faith, Love, Hope and Justice, with the four Evangelists ; in the outer circle, representations of Christ's Passion, together with the arrival of the Royal Godfather in England for the christening, in 1842. This inspiring emblem called forth a letter of dignified gratitude from the Queen to the King of Prussia.

Buckingham Palace.

May 1st, 1847.

Sire, my most honoured Brother,

I have to offer you my warmest thanks for your kind letter, for the magnificent shield which accompanied it, for the album of landscapes which are so dear to me through their association with you and for the works of your great ancestor.

The shield has been presented to your Godchild "with proper ceremonial" by Geheimrat Bunsen and has been explained with great enthusiasm by the expert Herr Hossauer. What a glorious thing it is ! Its poetry, good taste, artistic merit and fine workmanship all deserve praise,



and especially the idea which inspires the whole work. Your beautiful words: "This is for Him, from his Godfather, in the hope that he may prepare himself long in advance and ponder deeply on becoming one day Defender of the Faith. Whenever he looks at it, let him turn his eyes upon Faith, Justice and Love, and upon the sacred Evangelists who are inscribed upon it with the emblems of these virtues: above all let him consider their connection with the whole, namely, that if these virtues are to become a reality, they must spring from the centre and rest upon the Cross". These words, together with the shield, shall be the little knight's precious dowry for his whole life, shall encourage him to persistent effort during his years of apprenticeship and be his guardian angel during his years of service. He is still too young to express his gratitude to you personally. Your Majesty must therefore rest content with the thanks of his parents, who will always exhort him to show himself one day worthy of your gracious goodwill.

Your Majesty's long and extremely interesting letter to Albert is proof of a friendship and confidence which we can only reciprocate by an equal confidence and sincere friendship. Be assured that you may safely open your heart to us, without danger of being misunderstood, and that we consider your confidence a sacred trust which must be guarded with the greatest secrecy. Albert will himself answer Your Majesty's letter; I confine myself to assuring you that my thoughts are with you frequently and that my blessings accompany you in all your enterprises.

The events which, apart from the occurrences in Prussia, have claimed our greatest attention recently are those in Portugal and Greece. In both countries the monarchy is hemmed in between two contesting parties, whose importance, I fear, is misunderstood in this country, owing to inept parallels being drawn with the situation here. The task of correcting this misconception—without which a reform in our Cabinet's procedure cannot be effected—is

made doubly difficult by insular prejudice in political opinions.

Before taking leave of Your Majesty I would like to repeat how greatly delighted I am with the Rhine album, which recalls to me all the charming places that we visited in 1845 and our delightful meeting at the time.

With my most sincere greetings to the dear Queen, I remain, my good Brother, ever Your Majesty's devoted Sister

VICTORIA R.

In the next letter from Queen Victoria, the exchange of domestic courtesies was rudely disturbed. The King of Prussia had sent, not another present for his godson, but a political overture of far-reaching implications. He was seeking a firm alliance with England against the wave of radical agitation which swept Europe in the year 1848.

That year will always be remembered as one of violent political turmoil. In Brussels, Marx and Engels published the *Communist Manifesto*. The Milanese were in revolt. The Venetians established a republic and the Austrian Emperor was forced to abdicate, bringing down Metternich in his fall. These events alone would have been sufficient to make Queen Victoria anxious, but to them had been added another revolution, nearer home. Louis-Philippe renounced the throne of France and fled with Queen Marie Amélie to England. Some years before, they had been unable to cross the Channel because of the pressure of royal duties ; now they were thrown on to the shores of England as exiles and given sanctuary at Claremont. The institution of Monarchy was rudely attacked, far and wide, and Queen Victoria looked, with troubled eyes, on a Europe which was

torn by dissensions. Even the royal family in Belgium was apprehensive, and the Queen asked Victoria to take charge of some valuable documents as a precaution against what might happen. At the height of this alarm, the King of Prussia sent a letter, appealing for concerted action and stressing the gravity of the position. "God has permitted events which decisively threaten the peace of Europe", he wrote. "It is an attempt to spread the principles of the Revolution by *every* means throughout the whole of Europe". He went on to propose a joint declaration to France that any act of aggression, "be it with reference to Italy, Belgium or Germany", would be met with instant reprisals in concert by all the Powers.

It was a policy which has much in common with modern ideas of "collective security" and the device of "sanctions", but to direct it *in advance*, specifically against one country, might well be looked upon as tantamount to a challenge. Queen Victoria showed remarkable calm and wise judgment. She might have been nervous for her own throne when she saw the melancholy state of the refugees whom she was harbouring. She might have been tempted to pursue the course of action which the King of Prussia urged, but her wisdom prevailed. Her own sentiments were feelingly expressed, but she put them aside in an attempt to bring peace to Western Europe. The Franco-Prussian War was to come twenty years later, but the reply of the young Queen to the King of Prussia must nevertheless be considered as a triumph of serene political acumen over a natural instinct to declare aggressive disapproval of the behaviour of the French.

Buckingham Palace.

March 5th, 1848.

Sire, my most honoured Brother,

On hearing of the frightful occurrence in Paris, one of my first thoughts was for Your Majesty, whose noble and sensitive nature will feel no less horror at the misdeed and pity for the victims, than anxiety about the dark future. Your very friendly and open letter, which reached me yesterday, proves that Your gracious Majesty was also thinking of me in that first moment. And if to know this is in itself a joy, I rejoice still more to see that the sentiments which Your Majesty so well expresses are in the main an echo of my own and my Government's feelings.

One day the French will have to atone for the many crimes which they so constantly commit, and no fate would be more just than that they should be condemned to work out their own principles on themselves, and not allowed to escape the consequences of their actions by making wars on other nations. Let us therefore avoid, above all, any step which could provoke them to attack the rest of Europe or could be made a pretext for doing so ! But let us also unite in readiness to repel energetically any such attack ! I believe the French will be astonished to have met with so little response in Belgium and, as I hope will be the case, to meet with just as little in Germany.

The "united expression of opinion" which Your Majesty desires might, as an official statement coming at this moment, seem too much like a défi and give the French the impression that our united spirit was a coalition, which they might easily feel it was a point d'honneur to resist. Moreover we have heard privately from Lamartine that he is himself seriously endeavouring to establish the new French Government on a basis of peace and on the maintenance of the status quo, although, owing to the present excitement, he has to be extremely careful in his choice of words in public proclamations. The general wish in Paris seems to be for England's friendship, and we do not fail to

make clear that this is not compatible with ideas of territorial enlargement on the Continent. No power has so far respected treaties as sacredly as England, and, however lively the desire for peace may be in our country, neither people nor Parliament have failed so far, nor will they, I trust, ever fail in future, to support the Crown in fulfilling its obligations.

Sir Stratford Canning, of whose visit Your Majesty has often been advised, is to proceed now to Berlin and will be able to inform Your Majesty thoroughly of all our feelings.

I am deeply distressed about the poor royal family. One by one they are thrown upon our shores like shipwrecked mariners. Albert yesterday visited the dethroned King and Queen at Claremont where we have offered them a refuge. The dreadful things they have suffered cannot be described, and their hearts' wounds must be very, very deep. A dark future lies before us, but like you, honoured Brother, I build my refuge in God, in whom we shall find, as Luther found, "ein feste Burg".

May He be with you, with the dear Queen and with your whole kingdom, beloved Germany, with which I am so closely allied in blood, kinship and sentiment !

For ever Your Majesty's true friend and good Sister

VICTORIA R.

During the early years of her widowhood, Queen Victoria eschewed entertainment, but it would be wrong to build up the picture of a gloomy court upon the story of this time. She recovered from her melancholy and there are many stories of her gaiety in later years.

Her court was not as gloomy and impersonal as many people suppose. No sovereign has done more than Queen Victoria in the last two hundred and fifty

years, to encourage the art of acting, and it is surprising, in reading through the Queen's letters, to come on so many stories of singers and entertainers who were summoned to Windsor, varying in their gifts from the acting of Rachel to the eccentricities of Tom Thumb.

Prince Albert had been educated in acting and the drama as naturally as he was taught geology and mathematics. The theatre in Coburg was closely identified with the life of the court and, in the letters describing his childhood, there are many instances of plays being produced, with the young Coburg princes taking part. The Prince Consort brought this knowledge and enthusiasm with him to England and when the first hard years of his apprenticeship were over, he surrounded Queen Victoria with entertainment. She was quickly pleased by such relaxations and she soon shared his enthusiasm. Every year there were two or three theatrical companies summoned to Windsor, and sometimes as far as Balmoral. The Queen was not merely a royal patroness of the art of acting. She cared about it as a craft and she cared about the character of the theatre. Many years after the period covered by these letters, she asked Mr. Hare to produce *A Pair of Spectacles* at Windsor. She noted then, what she had sought in early years, that the dignity of the theatre was enriched by the merits of the players, outside their talents. She was pleased because Mr. Hare was not only a good actor, but "a gentleman, as so many actors are nowadays". This was the comment in her diary. The theatre was an important part of the Queen's life, during her marriage and in

the closing years, when she had learned to conquer her melancholy. She was not prudish in her selection of plays, nor in choosing the time for their production. It was her suggestion that plays should be acted on Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent, and she made every possible effort to elevate the profession, with honours and through her patronage. This concern was shown in a letter which the Queen wrote to the King of Prussia, in January of 1849. It was the first of many in which she shared her interest, with both the King and her friend Augusta.

Windsor Castle.

January 6th, 1849.

Sire, my most honoured Brother,

Chevalier Bunsen has been helping us in an attempt to revive and elevate the English drama which has greatly deteriorated through lack of support by Society. We are having a number of performances of classical plays in a small, specially constructed theatre in the castle, and are collecting what still remains of the older art. The stage has been erected in the room which you occupied, the Rubens room, and I never enter it without the most vivid recollections of your dear visit, already seven years ago. May it soon be repeated !

## CHAPTER II

1849-1851

THE next group of letters introduces the new correspondent, Augusta, Princess of Saxe-Weimar, who had married William of Prussia in 1829. When her brother-in-law, Frederick William IV, died in 1861, she became Queen of Prussia. It was her son who married Queen Victoria's eldest daughter. In 1846, Princess Augusta stayed for a week at Windsor and during this time she made a firm friend of Queen Victoria. The letters give us glimpses of a domestic unhappiness which is perhaps explained by Queen Victoria's comment, "she is too enlightened and liberal for the Prussian Court". Princess Augusta's husband was anything but liberal in his political views, and in 1848 he became so unpopular with the people that he had to disguise himself and escape to England. His wife and Queen Victoria were by then on a footing of unusual intimacy, and the letters show that the Princess discussed her troubles with her English friend. The education of her son, Prince Frederick, was obviously a source of conflict between the parents, and on one occasion, Queen Victoria intervened with a piece of very sound advice. "I am always afraid in his case of the consequences of a moral clash should his father strongly recommend something and his mother warn him against it", she wrote. "He will wish to please



both, and the fear of not succeeding will make him uncertain and hesitating and his attempts to do so will train him in falsehood—two of the greatest evils which can befall a Prince. . . .”

This shrewd judgment was perhaps reflected from the harmony which Queen Victoria now enjoyed with Prince Albert, and it gains an added importance in view of the fact that the boy was later to be Queen Victoria's son-in-law. True to royal tradition, he reacted strongly against his father's views and was quite as “enlightened” as his mother, opposing Bismarck and striving to liberalise German institutions.

In 1851 Princess Augusta was present at the opening of the Great Exhibition, and she stayed in England for four weeks. The difference in age between her and the Queen was only eight years, and they must have been most congenial companions. It is noticeable that when the visit terminated the Queen no longer addressed Augusta with the formal “Sie”, but used the intimate “Du”.

The first letter to Princess Augusta is of only slight interest. It is obviously a brief and rather dutiful attempt to save what was then only a minor friendship from falling into neglect. Queen Victoria's own account of her motive for writing, “showing a sign of life”, is a sufficient explanation: it is the kind of letter most people occasionally write to distant and half-forgotten relatives who come suddenly to mind and bring a twinge of conscience. At this stage the correspondence was desultory on both sides.

Princess Augusta's husband had spent two months of

exile in England during the previous year, and on his return, he quelled unrest in Baden. Queen Victoria's reference to him suggests that he was now held in higher esteem. The Earl of Westmorland, to whom the letter was entrusted, was the English Ambassador returning to Berlin.

Windsor Castle.

November 18th, 1849.

My dear Cousin,

I cannot possibly allow Lord Westmorland to return without sending a letter to you. It is a long time since I have heard from you, dear cousin, and I was very sorry to learn that you were still unwell. We were very interested to hear that your son\* is continuing his studies in Bonn ; I think back with such pleasure on our own visit to that town, with which I have so many interesting ties. My brother who met the dear young Prince and his father in Frankfurt wrote to tell me what a favourable impression he had of him. You must be glad to see that your husband is at last so fully appreciated in Germany.

I do not wish to discuss politics today ; you know my feelings and my sincere wishes for Germany. . . .

The diffusion of revolutionary ideas, easy access to firearms, and the fact that the monarch was still, in most countries, an autocrat rather than a neutral symbol, all helped to make the hundred years from Waterloo to the Great War a sinister age both for the individual assassin and for what the King of the Belgians described as "those societies *de Mort aux Rois et Souverains*". Assassination came to be recognised as one of the occupational hazards of monarchy, a part of the routine, and when Louis

\* Prince Frederick William.

Napoleon was reminding his future bride of the disadvantages to be weighed against the pleasures of royal status he calmly wrote, "*Je serai sans doute à vos côtés l'objet de plus d'une tentative d'assassinat*".

On May 22nd, 1850, the revolutionary Max Josef Sefeloge shot at the King of Prussia at the Potsdam railway station, wounding him in the right arm. Queen Victoria wrote immediately to commiserate with the King on a perilous experience to which she herself was no stranger. In 1840 the young Queen was fired at by a pot-boy on Constitution Hill. In 1842 she was twice the object of attempted assassination, and again in 1849 she was fired at. She showed remarkable fortitude on each occasion, particularly in May, 1842, when the assassin was not noticed at the first attempt, and the Queen with Prince Albert deliberately drove out again to draw the man's fire in the hope of capturing him. On Constitution Hill, the scene of three attempts in all, a pistol was again discharged and this time the criminal was seized. The experience must have been frightening, yet only two months later the Queen had to face a similar attack in Pall Mall.

When she wrote to the Prussian royal family, therefore, she had a special understanding of the feelings roused by such an experience. The King of Prussia's wounds yielded to treatment, but almost before they were healed, Queen Victoria was exposed to yet another attack, and that perhaps the most dastardly of all. Little over a month after her letters of sympathy to Prussia, she was brutally struck in the face with a heavy cane by an ex-officer. Well might she speak in

her letter to the King, of her own experience and its effect on her feelings.

Osborne.

May 25th, 1850.

Sire, my most honoured Brother,

I must add a few lines to Albert's letter to express to you personally my horror and disgust at the deed which brought Your Majesty's life into danger, and my thankfulness to God for so mercifully protecting you. I know from sad experience the painful feelings which such an incident leaves behind it, for one would so willingly believe good of everybody and be rid of suspicion. I send prayers to Heaven for your future welfare and am as always, honoured Brother, Your Majesty's sincerely devoted Sister

VICTORIA R.

The Queen wrote next day to Princess Augusta.

Osborne.

May 26th, 1850.

My dear Cousin,

This morning I received your dear letter of the 22nd and I thank you for it and for thinking of us on this terrible occasion. God has mercifully protected the dear King's life, and we cannot praise Him sufficiently for it. But the impression created by such an attack is very painful. How horrible it must have been for the poor Queen, and how much I admire her calm and self-control! I can so well imagine her feelings and her anxiety. I hope that we shall soon have more news about the dear King's health and also further details about the shameful assassin. I was much touched that the poor King thought of me at once. Albert wrote to him on the 7th of this month and to the Prince\* also inviting the latter to be a godfather at the christening of our little boy†; as no answer has arrived so far and as you do not mention it in your letter, we are

\* Prince William of Prussia, afterwards Emperor William I.

† Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, born May 1st, 1850.

afraid that these letters which were enclosed in a letter to Lord Westmorland, did not reach the King or the Prince. . . .

We arrived here on the 22nd and I am extremely well, I am thankful to say ; our seven children are flourishing, and our eldest son is much concerned at the event which threatened the life of his dear godfather.

Albert sends his affectionate remembrances and I remain ever your devoted cousin and friend

VICTORIA R.

Writers have seldom given Prince Albert full credit for his talents and his imagination. They still turn to the Albert Memorial as a symbol of his tastes, rather than to the collection of primitives which he made, in Buckingham Palace and the National Gallery. In the affairs of state and government, he showed equal enlightenment and no memorial to his lifework is more deserved than the museum collections and scholarships which were purchased and endowed from the profits of the Great Exhibition, in 1851.

The Exhibition, which was opened in Hyde Park in May, was Prince Albert's reprimand to the world. It came at a time when Europe was torn by many new ambitions and anxieties and it was his lesson in "peaceful occupation and enlightened husbandry", to illustrate to the world the superiority of the ploughshare over the sword. When the great day of the opening came, when Queen Victoria walked under the "blazing arch of lucid glass" with him beside her, she truthfully wrote in her Journal, "All is owing to Albert—All to him". She referred to the coming Exhibition in a letter to her friend in Prussia, written on April 20th. But there was a more important matter engaging the attention of both families in this year and it also creeps

into the letter, in tactful phrases. Prince Frederick of Prussia was now old enough to be reckoned with as a suitor and Queen Victoria's eldest daughter was old enough to be thought of as a future bride, although she had not yet even been confirmed. From this time, the plan of their marriage grew in shape, in the letters which were exchanged between the courts.

Buckingham Palace.

April 20th, 1851.

My dear Cousin,

I will not allow a day to pass without answering your dear and kind letter of the 15th.

We shall be delighted to have your dear little girl\* with us, and our girls are already looking forward joyfully to her visit. As regards your son, we think that, whatever plans may be made for the future, it would be best if you brought him with you now. It would then be much easier to discuss the best way of meeting your wishes for a prolonged stay with us. The young Prince should certainly not miss the Exhibition, and once he has made the acquaintance of England it will be easy for him to make another long visit, perhaps in the autumn. We fully share your anxiety and your interest in your dear son's future and in the importance of his education, particularly in these difficult and fateful times. We would be happy to think that we could be in any way helpful to you and to the dear Prince and could thus give you a proof of our friendship.

The official opening of the Exhibition is on May 1st ; if you could be present without any inconvenience to yourself, it would add greatly to the brilliance of the occasion. We hope therefore that you may be able to come some time during the last days of April.

I am looking forward with impatience to that joyful time and am truly rejoiced to see that you, dear Cousin, have retained your affection for Old England. I thank you in

\* Princess Louise, afterwards Grand-duchess of Baden.

advance for the promised lithograph of Winterhalter's painting, for he is a distinguished artist and an excellent man.

Hoping to receive a reply from you soon and with Albert's affectionate respects to you and ours to the dear Prince I remain ever your devoted cousin and friend

VICTORIA R.

Princess Augusta came to England with Prince Frederick, and during this time he met his future bride for the first time. Princess Augusta was in England for a month and the correspondence naturally lapsed during this time. But Queen Victoria's letters began again, with increasing affection, after her friend had returned to Prussia. Prince Frederick and the Princess Royal had liked each other when they met and the letters exchanged between the two courts had a new impetus in the promised betrothal. Queen Victoria displayed more than usual interest in the growing character of her future son-in-law, in the letters which she wrote in June.

Windsor Castle.

June 5th, 1851.

Dearest Cousin,

Your two very dear, affectionate letters of the 29th and 30th have deeply touched me and made me very happy. If only I were able to express myself as you do! It is a great joy to us to know that you were so happy with us and we hope for that reason that you will often repeat your visits. Those four weeks will always be a pleasant, happy memory for me. With all my heart I reciprocate the feelings of love, friendship and attachment which you so touchingly express in your two letters. A true and lasting friendship demands not only similarity of character, but also a sympathetic agreement upon the serious aspects of

life, particularly in regard to politics and religion ; and I have found this in you. Our sympathies, our opinions, our hearts agree so well that I cannot tell you how refreshing and pleasant your company has been and how much I miss you on that account !

June 6th. I could not write any more yesterday and will therefore continue today. But first of all I have a message to give you from Albert. He wishes me to tell you as a companion piece to the "Habeas Corpus" that that same person in conversation with an artist here so hotly contested the principle of equality before the law that he was carried away to exclaim : " If a nobleman shoots his servant you surely will not punish him in the same way as the servant if he shoots his master ? ! "—Albert begs you to consider this conversation as a strictly private matter, but thought that you ought to know what sort of opinions are cited to the public by your entourage.

We arrived here on the 2nd, having spent an hour and a half at the Exhibition during the morning ; when we left there were quite 20,000 people there ! There have been 55,000 in the building at the same time without undue crowding, and the public behaves admirably.

. . . . I have just had a talk with Stockmar who thinks that the consequences of a journey\* to Warsaw will not be as serious as you seem to anticipate, and I therefore beg you most sincerely not to worry and fret about future events which either will not happen at all or only in a very moderate degree. What I refer to here in general, I beg you to consider also as applicable to Fritz.

Buckingham Palace.

June 19th, 1851.

My dearest Cousin,

You have spoiled me so much by your dear letters that I almost feel like complaining at not having heard from you for a week. I hope to receive a few lines from my dear

\* Journey of Prince Frederick William.



friend today or tomorrow. Your letters always give me so much pleasure. . . .

But now I shall answer your last letter. I return the enclosures with many thanks. Fritz's letter has touched and pleased us (Albert, Stockmar and myself) very much. His pure, child-like nature is a treasure for which you may praise God. We understand your anxiety and grief over certain events, but we would like you not to be too sad and depressed.

With regard to Fritz's journey to Warsaw, I hope that your mind is now at rest about it. The few days he spent there cannot have had any considerable influence on him. On the contrary, a comparison with his recent visit to England will have been edifying to him. I beg of you to show more confidence in your dear son, so that he may likewise have confidence in himself. I am always afraid in his case of the consequences of a moral clash should his father strongly recommend something and his mother warn him against it. He will wish to please both, and the fear of not succeeding will make him uncertain and hesitating, and his attempts to do so will train him in falsehood—two of the greatest evils which can befall a Prince. . . .

We visited the Exhibition on the 14th and 16th as well as today. It has been enormously crowded the last few days, 68,000 people the day before yesterday. We see the people streaming past from early morning. London is terribly crowded, but everybody is in good humour, no cross words or such like. Uncle Leopold is well and really cheerful. He has already talked of you a great deal and sends his warmest greetings. My dear Albert sends many messages and I embrace you most tenderly. Ever your most faithful friend

VICTORIA R.

## CHAPTER III

1852-1854

THE correspondence of 1852 began with two events to enliven Queen Victoria's imagination. One was the death of the King of Hanover, for whom her memories were tinged with bitterness and the other was Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* in Paris, in the previous December. The death of the King of Hanover was of no more than passing moment to the Queen. The news revived memories of the days of her accession, of his rudeness to Prince Albert and of his stubbornness with her. Her resentment had not died, but she did not divert it to the new, young blind king, George the Fifth.

It was Louis Napoleon who engaged the full attention of both the Queen and Prince Albert. The old year had ended with domestic alarm, brought on by the affairs in France. Queen Victoria's permanent enemy, Lord Palmerston, had been obliged to resign from the Foreign Office because he had communicated indirectly with the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, expressing his approbation of the act of the President. His behaviour had forced Lord John Russell's hand. He had been "reluctantly compelled to come to the conclusion" that the conduct of foreign affairs could no longer be left in Palmerston's hands "with advantage to the country". The year had therefore ended with a triumph for the Queen and Prince Albert. "Palmerston is out. . . . I nearly dropped off my chair", wrote Greville. The new year began with this added solace

for the Court, and Queen Victoria had been able to write, hopefully, that Palmerston had "done with the Foreign Office forever".

Queen Victoria now resigned herself to Prince Albert's judgment without demur. She made the surprising admission to her uncle, "We women are not made for governing", and she wrote, "Albert grows daily fonder and fonder of politics and business". The business which concerned him most at this time was the defence of the country. France was an alarming neighbour, under the ambitious and erratic control of Louis Napoleon, and Prince Albert enquired into the strength of the army and the coastal defences. He was appalled by the signs of weakness which he discovered.

The first letter of the new, busy year was written by Queen Victoria to the King of Prussia.

Windsor Castle.

January 9th, 1852.

Sire, my most honoured Brother !

Only today am I able to reply to the most friendly and gracious letter which Your Majesty wrote to me from Brunswick, and in which you gave me such a moving description of the funeral ceremonies in Hanover. Although I had only seen my late uncle once in the past fifteen years and although he was only rarely on tolerable terms with his brothers and sisters and relatives, his death moved me because he was my grandfather's last remaining son. To poor George, I offer that wholehearted sympathy which his amiable character and great affliction must inevitably inspire.

Since the receipt of your letter, many important things have happened. The coup d'état in Paris will have recalled Your Majesty's youth to you, and Louis Napoléon, fearing that this might not be sufficient, has refreshed the memory

of all the Governments of Europe by re-introducing the eagles on the colours of the French army, by hints about changes of frontiers, etc. Nevertheless I am firmly convinced that peace will be maintained. I am however more uneasy at the thought that the Continental Governments, already far advanced in their blind reactionary attitude, may now be tempted, by the example of Paris and, in the erroneous belief that a political structure which has been built on the ruins of all civic freedom, with the blood of the French middle-classes, could be of eternal duration, may be encouraged to widen still further the breach with their peoples and destroy completely all faith in the political morality of Governments. However, I was truly rejoiced at the assurance which your loyal Bunsen has given my Government in the name of yours, that Your Majesty is firmly resolved to maintain the constitution which has become a law to you. By this resolve Your Majesty will secure the confidence of the German people, the greatness of Prussia's future and the sincere friendship of England as well as of all lovers of legal freedom !

Your Majesty will have wept bitter tears with the rest of Europe on hearing of Lord Palmerston's retirement from my cabinet !? I pray that the public here will understand that England's national policy was not correctly expressed in his interpretation of it ! He will do his best to prove the contrary (and has a special talent for leading an assembly to erroneous conclusions). That Your Majesty has fully appreciated the difference is proved to me by the obliging way in which you have charged Bunsen not to proceed with the claims about the refugees, a proof of friendship for which I offer you herewith my sincere thanks.

In conclusion I beg Your Majesty to accept mine and Albert's warmest good wishes for the New Year, both for yourself and the dear Queen. In unchanging friendship I remain, Your Majesty's sincerely devoted Sister

VICTORIA R.

In a letter to Princess Augusta, written in May, Queen Victoria again spoke of the great happiness her new friendship was bringing to her. Since December of 1850 she had been without an intimate woman correspondent in all the Courts of Europe. It was then that Queen Louise, wife of King Leopold of the Belgians, had died. Their correspondence had been lightened with all the frankness and affection she was now willing to give to Princess Augusta. The Queen wrote to her from Osborne, in May, and from Buckingham Palace in June.

Osborne.

May 23rd, 1852.

Beloved Cousin,

Your two dear and affectionate letters of the 2nd, from Koblenz and of the 5th, from Münster delighted and touched me very much. I can also assure you with all my heart that your friendship and confidence make me extremely happy, for in my position I am sorely in need of a friend who understands me and who shares my views in so many respects. This friendship is doubly valuable to me at this moment, because two and a half years ago I lost my dearly beloved friend Louise, a loss which you felt for and with me.

May 25th.—We spent yesterday\* very happily. My beloved husband was extremely affectionate to me and gave me the most beautiful presents, among them a marvellous miniature of himself, painted by Thorburn, and the two portraits of Bertie and Affie, painted by Winterhalter. There was dancing in the evening and Helen was allowed to join for the first time. You may well imagine how dignified she was! The dear children took the greatest pains to give me pleasure, Vicky in particular! I enclose this letter which she wrote to me, for you to read, as I think it is truly pretty, and she wrote it all by herself. Please return it to me!

\* The Queen's birthday.

Buckingham Palace.

June 14th, 1852.

What you tell me about your noble relations interests us very much. The Emperor\* cannot change his opinion. Everything does look rather black for Germany just now, but we must not give up hope of a better future. You were right not to object to Fritz's journey to Russia ; it would have been in vain. I hope that his next journey will bring him to England and Scotland. I presume there can be no question of it this year ? He has written me a very dear letter which I shall answer very soon. . . .

There are German performances here just now which interest me greatly ; we have already seen *Egmont*, *Don Carlos* and *Kabale und Liebe*. The company, led by the excellent Devrient, is really very good.

In 1852 a family by the name of Madiai had suffered persecution in Florence for avowing the Evangelical Faith, and the King of Prussia invited Queen Victoria to join him in sending a protest.

Lord Palmerston was perhaps the most enthusiastically chivalrous of Victorian politicians, and there were times when his bland and tactless interventions angered the Queen ; but on this occasion her indignation was worthy of Palmerston himself, and she added her authority to that of the King of Prussia. Queen Victoria could doubtless depend on popular support, as barely two years previously England had heard the old cry of "No Popery" in answer to a Papal Brief, re-establishing the hierarchy of Roman Catholic Bishops in England. The French Government added its weight to the protest, and within a few months the Protestant family of Madiai was liberated. The French were eager to claim credit for this minor diplomatic triumph.

\* Nicholas I of Russia.

Balmoral.

September 23rd, 1852.

Honoured Sir and Brother,

Your Majesty's kind letter, in which You invite me to join with You in intervening to help an unfortunate, ill-used and cruelly persecuted Protestant family in Florence, is further proof to me of Your noble, warm-hearted spirit, and of Your friendly trust in myself. The sad fate of the Madiari family has provoked general anger in this country as well, the more so because the wife lived for a considerable time with an English family of note, was acquainted personally with many people, and loved and respected by all who knew her.

That she should be sent to penal servitude merely for having professed the Evangelical faith outrages our sense of justice. About three weeks ago the Prince wrote personally to the Grand Duke\* on the subject, and, knowing that the latter is entirely in the hands of his spiritual adviser, he laid stress on the fact that the news of such inhuman cruelty towards poor Protestants could not fail to arouse indignation among the English people against the Catholic Church, an indignation which would only harm the Catholics here, and render fruitless my endeavours to reconcile the quarrelling religious parties.

So far there has been no reply. I will in the meantime gladly instruct my ambassador in Florence to unite with Yours in an attempt to lead the Grand Duke to a recognition of his duty as a Christian.

Alas! I am writing to You today in deep sorrow, a sorrow in which You, I know, will truly share, for the good Duke† was to You also a Field-Marshal, a friend, a hero. The country is inconsolable, and will feel as I do that each day increases our sense of loss. For him one could not have wished a happier end. He died in his eighty-fourth year, in full possession of his mental faculties. Lord Hardinge, whom You know well, and who is a companion in

\* Grand Duke Leopold II of Tuscany.

† The Duke of Wellington, who died in September, 1852.

arms to the Prussian forces, is to take over the command of my army and will direct it in the spirit of its late chief and leader.

May Your Majesty continue to be spared all anxiety !

I must once more express to You my warmest thanks for the many, many kindnesses and favours which You have shown to my cousin George.\* I joyfully gave him permission to wear the Black Eagle with which You graciously decorated him, and of which he will at all times endeavour to be worthy. . . .

The funeral of the Duke of Wellington brought to mind a less successful intervention in European affairs. In 1850, the Austrian General Haynau, notorious as a flogger of women, came to England and in the course of his tour he paid a visit to Barclay and Perkins' brewery. Unfortunately, his reputation had preceded him, and he was attacked by the draymen. The affair took on a serious diplomatic significance when Lord Palmerston despatched an "apology" which added some measure of insult to the original injury. This grievance was not forgotten, and the Austrians retaliated in 1852 by boycotting the Duke of Wellington's funeral—an ungracious action which destroyed Queen Victoria's sympathy for General Haynau.

Prussia, however, was worthily represented at the Duke's funeral, and in her next letter to the King of Prussia Queen Victoria stressed her desire for an Anglo-Prussian alliance by aptly recalling the partnership of Blücher and the dead Duke. The turbulent French were assumed to be the natural enemy, and this view must have been strengthened a few days later when Louis Napoleon re-entered Paris as Napoleon III, Emperor of the French.

\* The Duke of Cambridge.



Osborne.

Nov. 30th, 1852.

Most honoured Sir and Brother !

Your Majesty's kind letter which Graf Nostitz handed to me gave me great pleasure, confirming as it does the similarity of our feelings in regard to the great man who has been taken from us. Graf Nostitz will be able to inform You of the nation's deep grief during the funeral, and of the impressive dignity of the occasion. I am in duty bound to thank Your Majesty most sincerely for the excellence of the troops chosen to represent the Prussian army. I was very pleased to have had the opportunity of meeting these gentlemen personally and of talking with them about You, most honoured Brother. May the future find the European powers who acted in concert at the last victory of Wellington and Blücher as united and valiant as before, should there be any fresh threats against the general peace from the side of France ! The ceremony of the funeral brought this concord clearly to light ; only Austria was missing ! !

"L'Empire c'est la paix !" \*—may it be so ! On our side, nothing will be left undone to maintain friendly relations, yet we believe that to achieve success in this line a degree of armament is necessary. To this end the Navy, the Artillery, and War Supplies are to be specially reinforced. The Army, too, will certainly require strengthening, but in a crisis this is more easily achieved than in the other forces. The country is united, happy, prosperous and resolute. A nation draws its strength in outside affairs from its inner harmony and contentment. This thought often makes me afraid for Germany !

Queen Victoria's correspondence with the King of Prussia remained on the formal level of statesman-like discussion, but her letters to Princess Augusta express a very different side of her rich personality. / Encouraged by the intimacy of their days together during the Great

\* The propagandist motto of the Second French Empire.

Exhibition, Queen Victoria shares the small domesticities and informal gossip of her private life with her friend. After the composition of official documents, it must have been a relief for her to write about the children's plays and the appointment of someone so politically unimportant as a governess. Even when she mentioned Napoleon's marriage, Queen Victoria treated it in womanly fashion, as a welcome tit-bit of news. There is nothing to suggest the attention with which the Queen was studying every move in France.

Napoleon's bride was Eugénie de Montijo, a Spaniard of partly American extraction. Queen Victoria frequently expressed her desire to keep France at peace with Europe, and she accordingly did what was in her power to forward general recognition of Napoleon as Emperor. Her sympathies were still with Prussia, but she was determined to avoid all risk of war. The King of Prussia thought her unnecessarily polite to the French, but her apprehensions were justified. From King Leopold came the report of Napoleon having said to his bride—"*des complots sérieux se fomentent dans l'armée . . . je compte bien d'une manière ou d'autre prévenir toute explosion : le moyen sera peut-être la guerre*". He is a dangerous gambler who will start a war to divert military plotting at home, and Queen Victoria was determined to ensure that the relationship between England and France should be scrupulously correct.

Windsor Castle.

January 24th, 1853.

Dearest Cousin,

For the last ten days at least I have been wanting to write to you and thank you for your dear interesting letter

of the 30th, but could not manage it—now I have to thank you for a second one too, of the 12th, in which you spoke so very amiably and kindly about my little collection. If only I knew what I could send you, dear friend, that would give you pleasure ! Things are going on well with us ; we have had much company here during the last 3 weeks and our performances went off very well. We have had 3 already and are to have two more. You will have seen from Vicky's letter to Wiwy that the children have been acting Racine's *Athalie* (naturally abridged), and I really must say that it was a great success. I enclose a bill for you and will shortly send you a little picture of it. Vicky and Alice really acted excellently. Bunsen saw the 2nd performance of it ; otherwise hardly any spectators were present except the most intimate of the household. *Le grand événement du jour* (the great event of the day) is the incredible marriage of the Emperor Nap. In France it is being very badly received. The future bride is beautiful, clever, very coquette, passionate and wild. What do they say about it in Germany ?

So your King is going to Vienna ; I presume a return visit. All that you told me about the young Emperor's visit to Berlin interested us greatly. Our ministry is going on well. May it only continue to do so.

For your dear son it would certainly be necessary to secure a wider intercourse with men of distinction, and also that he should get away from Potsdam a little. Some travel in the course of the summer and autumn would be most desirable. How glad I am that the new governess is suitable and that you like her.

Today is dear Hélène's birthday. The Queen has gone to her at Kithy [? Kitly] : I am afraid it is a very damp and relaxing place to stay at.

On February 12th we are going to London and unfortunately in March we are not going to Osborne (as usual), since (as you will probably have heard) our already so numerous family is going to have an addition in the early

Spring. But as always I am going on very well, and I am doing everything as usual.

When will your niece's marriage take place? Amélie's\* is to be celebrated in May. We see Edward† frequently; the poor Countess is horribly shy and quite buries herself out of sight in society.

The weather is almost always the same; the rain keeps starting again; it is very unhealthy.

Farewell, dear Cousin, my Albert lays himself at your feet, and pray give our heartiest greetings to the Prince.

Ever your faithful cousin and friend,

V. R.

Please thank Wiwy very much for her nice letter.

On March 19th, 1853, the Court moved to Windsor. Soon after they had dined, a fire broke out in the Prince of Wales's tower. The alarm brought soldiers and local fire engines to the rescue. At two o'clock in the morning a party of men from the London Fire Brigade arrived, with two engines, in a special train. By four o'clock the flames were under control. "Fortunately", wrote *The Times* correspondent, "there was a plentiful supply of water from the Cranbourne tank, which had only been laid on to this part of the Castle in the autumn of last year, or in all probability the whole of the Castle would have been burnt down. The frost was so intense during the night as considerably to retard the action of the engines, while it no doubt favoured the action of the flames. They appear to have spread with great rapidity and force, and to have resisted for an unusual time the immense volumes of water thrown upon them". There had been no need for the Queen to leave her own suite, which was in no danger.

\* Countess of Paris.

† Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar.

Princess Augusta wrote of the fire and on March 28th, the Queen thanked her for her letter and gave her a brief account of what had happened.

Windsor Castle.

March 28th, 1853.

My dearest Cousin,

How kind and good it is of you to have commiserated with us about the Castle fire and to have been so concerned about it ! I was not at all frightened, for at the start no one knew whether it was serious or not, and afterwards I was constantly near at hand and could know and hear everything. Although we did not get to bed until just before two, I was not in the least tired or upset by it. The banqueting-hall and the rooms above it were burned out, but there was time enough to save furniture etc. from the flames. Thank God there was no scarcity of water nor of people to put it out, yet from ten till four, the fire continued to burn. By one o'clock all danger was over.

In May, 1853, Princess Augusta again came to England, accompanied by her husband and their daughter Louise. In the previous month, Queen Victoria had given birth to her fourth son, Prince Leopold, and Princess Augusta was invited to be one of the sponsors at the christening. Albert's brother, Ernest, was also invited, and the blind King of Hanover came to share the responsibilities. The infant boy was named Leopold, after the King of the Belgians, George, after the King of Hanover, Albert, after his father, and Duncan "as a compliment to dear Scotland".

In her letter to Princess Augusta, Queen Victoria gave an interesting description of her eldest daughter, "Vicky". The friendship of the mothers was apparently reflected in the daughters, and the Princess Royal

looked forward to renewed companionship with "Wiwy"—as Princess Augusta's daughter Louise was called.

There is nothing in Queen Victoria's letter to indicate the storm that was brewing in Europe, but the royal reunion at the christening took on a more sombre significance when the party attended a military review at Chobham camp. This camp, the origin of the modern Aldershot, was one of the innovations with which the Prince Consort aimed to strengthen England's military resources. There was already a feeling that war was possible, and as early as 1840, Prince Albert had prophesied to Palmerston that "in five or six years a war between England and Russia cannot be avoided". At this time there was also an air of uncertainty about the policy that the French would pursue, and Prince Albert continued to urge rearmament. The War Office had had few new ideas since the days of Waterloo, and Albert found plenty of scope for improvement. His brother was asked to send a Prussian needle-gun to England, the great camp at Chobham was established, and the review which followed the christening must have demonstrated to the Prussians and Hanoverians that England was alive to the need for military preparation.

Windsor Castle.

March 28th, 1853.

Dearest Cousin,

From Albert's letter to the Prince you will have already learned how much the assured prospect of your visit rejoices us, and I write today to thank you for your dear letter of the 28th, and to repeat my joy at the thought of it. You know my sincere love and attachment for you, beloved cousin, and can therefore readily imagine how happy it will

make me to spend a little time in your company. Vicky is counting on seeing her dear friend Wiwy once more, and I hope that you will bring her with you. Vicky will look small beside Wiwy, although she has grown a great deal. Our children grow slowly but surely. She no longer wears her hair (except for riding) under a net, as she used to two years ago. She has so much hair that it is now wound up and knotted like a grown-up person's. It is done in an unusual way, however. She has made much progress with her music, and has a great deal of talent for drawing ; she has a genuine love of art and expresses opinions about it like a grown-up person, with rare good sense. She has inherited that from her father. Indeed they have all a natural aptitude for drawing. I look forward to showing you Arthur, who is truly a pretty and amusing child. . . .

During the winter it became increasingly evident that Europe was stumbling on the threshold of war. The Russians had apparently calculated that the Western Powers would not unite with the infidel Turk against another Christian monarchy, and they accordingly took the high-handed course of sending troops into Moldavia and Wallachia. (Nevertheless, diplomatic attempts were still made to prevent a formal declaration of war.) Public opinion at home suffered a *crise de nerfs* during these long months of uncertainty. By Christmas, one ill-informed but vociferous section had started a scare to the effect that Prince Albert was secretly in league with Russia, and the ballad-monger was soon at work.

“ We'll send him home and make him groan,  
 Oh Al ! you've played the deuce then ;  
 The German lad has acted sad  
 And turned tail with the Russians.”

This was the song of the streets, and rumours of Prince Albert's wickedness increased until a large crowd gathered in the genuine expectation of seeing the Queen and her Consort committed to the Tower of London. Albert lost his temper for once, and said that he was living in a "madhouse". Queen Victoria wrote bitterly to Princess Augusta, telling her what was being said, and expressing her indignation.

Windsor Castle.

January 13th, 1854.

Dearest Friend,

For the last three weeks there have been vile attacks in the newspapers against my dear husband, who is accused of intriguing in the interests of Russia ! They are quite mad, and although such nonsense gains no credit among sensible people who respect and love Albert, yet they have provided an occasion for many dreadful remarks, and the whole affair will probably continue until notice is taken of it in Parliament. It probably originated from a few envious and malicious people, and will be eagerly pursued and even believed by the ignorant. It has all arisen through the enormous excitement in the country over the Eastern question. You will easily understand how enraged and indignant I feel about it. . . .

Parliament met at the end of January, 1854, and action was immediately taken to clear Prince Albert of the slanders to which he had been exposed. It was he who had foreseen the probability of war and urged preparation ; the irresponsibilities of public malice could have settled on no more inappropriate scapegoat. Happily, the speeches in Parliament put an end to the absurd rumours, and Queen Victoria wrote with delight and relief to Princess Augusta, to tell her that Albert's slanderers had been silenced.



Windsor Castle.

February 2nd, 1854.

Dearest Friend,

I am once more using the courier as an opportunity to send you a newspaper of yesterday which correctly describes the ceremony of the opening of Parliament and that evening's debate, from which you and the Prince will be glad to discover that the shameful and infuriating slanders against my good and beloved husband have been triumphantly refuted. The speeches of Lord John and Lord Aberdeen are excellent, and, I believe, very significant for the future.

I also send you two sketches of the camp at Chobham, which I would like to offer to the dear Prince. . . .

## CHAPTER IV

1854-1855

THE tangle of diplomacy that preceded the Crimean War is beyond the scope of this book, which is narrowed down to the part played by Queen Victoria. The point that emerges from the mass of negotiations is that Prussia, and to some extent England, held the key to the situation. Russia and France stood at the two extremes. The Czar had refused to recognise the sovereignty of Napoleon, and he believed that the Ottoman Empire was about to break up. Napoleon had no affection for the Czar, and he was pleased to find a war which would occupy the energies of his army. So far as these two monarchs were concerned, the desire for peace was by no means whole-hearted. England enjoyed friendly relations with Russia, but had no wish to see Russian influence spreading into Asia Minor and the Levant where, as the events of 1877 proved, she might become a danger to Britain's dominion in the Mediterranean. Queen Victoria was encouraged by Prince Albert to look upon Prussia as an ally. He considered that a strong Prussia was necessary to the peace of Europe. They both hoped that concerted diplomatic pressure, led by England and Prussia, would inspire the Czar to withdraw from the Principalities. Prussia's position was even more ambiguous. There was the glorious memory of the Belle Alliance with England, but the Czar had married

the King of Prussia's sister and Russian influence had spread westwards. Moreover, Bismarck, a new force in Prussian politics, was determined never to prejudice the Russian alliance. As the negotiations hardened, each side tried to detach Prussia from its alliance with the other. In February, Queen Victoria wrote, "if Austria and Prussia go with us—as we hope they will—the war will only be a local one". For a time both these countries were in the anti-Russian Alliance, but their support weakened as hostilities drew nearer. The war of diplomacy was one thing, the war of battlefields was another. By March, Queen Victoria knew that Prussia did not intend to fight and she sent the King of Prussia an eloquent and spirited argument, reminding him that if great Powers were to study their own interests exclusively, "then the civilisation of Europe would be delivered up to the play of the winds". The King of Prussia had asked Queen Victoria "to examine the question in a spirit of love for peace, and even now to build a bridge for the Imperial honour". Queen Victoria's reply gives, with engaging bluntness, her own view of the protracted and abortive negotiations that had already taken place. "All the architecture of diplomacy and of goodwill have been uselessly wasted during these last nine months in this bridge-building! The *Projets de Notes, de Conventions, de Protocoles*, etc., etc., have proceeded by the dozen from the Chancelleries of the different Powers, and one might call the ink wasted on them another Black Sea". War, in fact, was now inevitable. The formal declaration was made in England on March 29th, 1854, and a few days later Queen Victoria sent a copy of it to

Princess Augusta, adding regretfully, "We had hoped to proceed hand in hand".

This letter shows how Queen Victoria and Prince Albert shared their thoughts and opinions. In speaking of the declaration of war, Queen Victoria says with disarming *naïveté*, "It is very dignified". The next day Albert wrote to his brother, "I hope you found our declaration of war dignified. We are very benevolent towards the neutrals in our declarations".

Buckingham Palace.

April 2nd, 1854.

. . . Our declaration of war took place on the 29th. It is very dignified. I enclose it in this letter. May God give it his blessing and grant that as little blood as possible may be shed ! It is a very stirring moment ! You, dear friend, speak with so much feeling and affection. And alas, how Prussia's unfortunate position must distress and disturb you ! For us it is extremely painful to see Prussia irresolute when we had hoped to proceed hand in hand ! I hope that time will bring them to a better understanding. . . .

The King of Prussia's withdrawal from the anti-Russian alliance had severe repercussions within his own state, and Queen Victoria was soon receiving news of dissensions which culminated in the dismissal of Ministers and the downfall of Augusta's husband. Bunsen, who was highly esteemed by Queen Victoria, and the Prussian Minister of War, Bonin, were both superseded, and the Prince was relieved of his duties and sent on leave. Queen Victoria wrote sympathetically to the Princess, and in a more admonitory way to the King. Still constant in her belief in the rightness of an Anglo-Prussian alliance, Queen Victoria wrote, "The

men with whom you have broken were faithful and true servants, faithful to you with warmest devotion. . . . When such men, including a loving brother, see themselves compelled to turn from you in such a difficult crisis, then this is a hard sign which might well give Your Majesty cause to counsel Yourself and to test, with anxious care, if the hidden and future evil cannot be in the opinion of Your Majesty yourself? ”

Buckingham Palace.

April 4th, 1854.

Beloved Augusta

This morning I received you dear, long and confidential letter of the 25th, and I thank you most heartily for it. I will write fully by the next courier. Let me just say now how my heart bleeds for you, beloved, good friend ! Only do not you nor the dear Prince lose courage ! God will help you ! Of our friendship, love and sympathy you can always be assured !

Queen Victoria continued to send personal expressions of sympathy to the Princess, and in May she was able to add favourable news of the war. The Russians had fired on a flag of truce, and in retaliation Odessa had been bombarded and its batteries put out of action. “The Fleets have done their duty admirably at Odessa”, Queen Victoria wrote to King Leopold, “the town has not been touched, and all the fortifications and many ships have been destroyed”.

Buckingham Palace.

May 13th, 1854.

Dear Augusta

I have just received your dear letter of the 9th, for which I thank you from my heart, and shall wait impatiently for

your full letter to follow. I am seizing a safe opportunity to have this letter conveyed to you, though I have very little time to write to you today. My husband is writing to the most honoured Prince.

Oh God, what a situation in Berlin ! What goings on ! How I pity the dear, excellent Prince ! Has he resigned his post in the Rhine Provinces ? The position of the King is untenable ; do you think that the country will allow it ? You know my attachment to you and how profound is my desire to see Prussia established in her rightful position in Europe, and can therefore understand how upset I am by the present state of affairs there. For good Fritz' sake I am also truly sorry ; how awkward things will be for him too in Berlin !

Since beginning my letter we have been to Woolwich for the launching of the "Royal Albert," a magnificent propeller-ship with 131 guns ; I christened her. There was a terrible mass of people present, the weather was very good. Yesterday evening we attended the costume ball (though we were not ourselves in costume) at the French Ambassador's. It was a really pretty ball, very well organised and with many lovely dresses. We went in honour of the Alliance, which is so important for England, and as an act of courtesy to the Emperor.

The news from Odessa is very momentous, although the Russians look upon the destruction of all their ships and batteries as a victory ! The Prince should charge Graf Henckel (who is clever and sensible) to inform him of the state of affairs and keep him in touch with what is really happening.

I hear that Bunsen intends going to settle in Heidelberg, but to return here often.

Now I must close in the hope of hearing again soon from my dear, good friend. Albert sends you his sincere good wishes, as do I to the dear Prince.

Ever your devoted cousin and friend.

V.R.

During the summer of 1854, Queen Victoria's letters to Princess Augusta reverted to the simpler domestic themes which had filled their earlier correspondence, and the war was relegated temporarily to the background. At the end of May, the Queen wrote a letter of congratulation on the engagement of the Princess Louise to the future Grand-Duke of Baden.

Queen Victoria had a great affection for "Wiwy", and for a moment she allowed herself a day-dream of "such another", young enough to be considered as the future wife of an English Prince. Perhaps she was wishing that her eldest son could marry a daughter of Augusta's, when she wrote, "Oh ! if only you had such another daughter". The wish remained a day-dream and one of the fascinating "ifs" of history.

Osborne.

May 30th, 1854.

Dearest Augusta !

For three dear, affectionate letters of the 19th, 22nd and 24th I thank you, also for your pretty present. I value your dear expressions as they deserve to be valued, for you know well how happy my friendship with you makes me. Dear, good friend, our thoughts are often with both of you in this time of trial ! It is a joy to know that Stockmar is with you, for his presence must be a comfort and an encouragement.

Buckingham Palace.—Just arrived here, and I will now continue my letter. The news which you are so dear and so kind as to confide in us rejoices us exceedingly. We had already long wished for such a wife for the good Fritz of Baden, and I consider that you yourselves have every reason to be happy at the choice of such a husband for your dear

child, for the Regent is a truly good, clever and charming person ; we were very favourably impressed by him and he is universally praised . . . I hope that we shall see the dear child once more before her marriage, which I suppose will not take place for another year ? Oh, if only you had such another daughter, a younger ! I know of no young girl who would fill a high position so well as Wiwy !

I regret your return to Berlin, where everything must be dismal. We may not and cannot alter the Prince's entourage !

In August, Queen Victoria and her family were at Osborne, and something of the homely atmosphere there is caught in her description of Prince Albert's birthday. No celebration could be quieter or more intimate than this gathering *en famille*, with the children earnestly performing their party pieces for their father's pleasure. Queen Victoria's devotion to her husband finds here a simple and sincere expression, which is underlined by her grief at the thought of a separation lasting less than a fortnight. At the end of August, Prince Albert visited France, as a gesture to Britain's ally in the Russian war. The visit was both necessary and brief, but the time seemed "so long without him" to Queen Victoria and she wished Princess Augusta could be with her. Only the thought of the much greater suffering of her soldiers' wives could persuade the Queen to set a limit to her own sad humour.

The letter ends happily in family gossip. The Princess was now residing in Baden-Baden, and it was therefore possible for her frequently to see Queen Victoria's half-sister, Princess Feodora, who was also



living there at the time. The Queen remarks charmingly, " Loving one another as tenderly as we two sisters do, you will find in her something of your old friend ". Some light is also thrown on the upbringing of Queen Victoria's children. \ Prince Albert's strenuous idealism had extended to the nursery, and the children were rich in accomplishments. They had celebrated their father's birthday with every kind of drawing-room performance, and in speaking of " Vicky ", Queen Victoria mentions that swimming, " so useful " in her opinion, was also in the curriculum. Perhaps the royal example is to be thanked for a modern enthusiasm, but it is certainly difficult to appreciate the need for importing a woman from Boulogne as instructress.

Osborne.

August 28th, 1854.

Dearest Friend,

Yesterday was the dear birthday of my beloved husband, which we celebrated peacefully and happily in the bosom of our family, blessed by wonderful weather. The children again did all they could to make their dear, adored father happy ; they drew, worked, recited, wrote compositions, played the piano and Affie the violin.

August 28th. I have been prevented until today from finishing my letter, and you must please forgive me if it is badly written and confused ; I have been lately suffering a great deal from nervousness and am therefore not capable of writing so connectedly as usual ; otherwise I am well, my husband too and the children. Alas, I am faced with a separation from him, the longest, apart from that of ten years ago (when he went to Germany after his poor father's death and was away for a fortnight) that we have suffered since our marriage. He is leaving on the evening of the 4th

for Boulogne to visit our great neighbour in camp and does not return until the 9th. I confess that I am really upset at the thought of being so long without him, and yet I must not be unreasonable nor in any way ungrateful to Providence when I remember how many poor wives, mothers and sisters are anxious about their dear ones in these perilous times of war ! Oh, how they are to be pitied ! Added to that is the terrible cholera which has already claimed so many victims. The French army in the East has apparently lost as many as between five and seven thousand men from it ! Here it is somewhat less, that is, in London, for there is nothing of the kind hereabouts.

I am overjoyed to know that you often see my dear sister. She is a wonderful person, one who has been sorely tried, and has had much sorrow in life. She speaks with the utmost gratitude of the Prince's and your kindness to her. Loving one another as tenderly as we two sisters do, you will find in her something of your old friend. If only you could be with me for a little while during Albert's absence, how glorious that would be ! God grant that we see each other soon again ! We understand each other so well, and it is so comforting to have a friend with whom one can share every experience !

Vicky is growing fast and her figure is developing ; she is taking swimming lessons from a Frenchwoman whom we have brought over from Boulogne. The boys have already learnt to swim ; it is so useful.

As autumn passed into winter, thoughts of war again filled Queen Victoria's mind. In the summer she had been worried by the defenceless state in which England was left ; in India there was an exaggerated idea of Russian power and a belief that England had met her match. Harassed with anxiety and well aware of the feebleness of Turkey, Queen Victoria could not escape that civilian hysteria which habitually infects the Home

Front. Her next letter to Princess Augusta retailed the conventional atrocity stories and expressed a wish that she were a man, so that she might join in the fighting. One moment her heart "bleeds for the many fallen", while the next she finds that *pro patria mori* is the most beautiful death for a man. It is the sincere confusion of a woman distracted by events beyond her control.

Windsor Castle.

Oct. 23rd, 1854.

. . . We have heard no news from Sebastopol ; the long suspense is worrying and hard to endure calmly. May God grant a happy issue and by His grace protect our brave soldiers ! They are indeed deserving of it. I send you herewith the two telegrams from Lord Raglan, which are really wonderful and admirable ; also a private letter from a young officer. Poor Lord Chewton of the Scots Guards has died of wounds, and his poor wife has just given birth to a son ! Chewton had eleven wounds and six bullets in his body !

The Russians have not buried their dead and have abandoned their wounded ; both these things are shameful. Several wounded Russians shot at our soldiers and officers as they were tending them, and there was great confusion in our ranks. There was one instance of a young officer who was shot by a wounded man as he was offering him drink ! These details will certainly interest you. You will understand it when I assure you that I regret exceedingly not to be a man and to be able to fight in the war. My heart bleeds for the many fallen, but I consider that there is no finer death for a man than on the battlefield ! . . .

The situation in Prussia is very sad ; here people are naturally very annoyed with the King and the Government, which is, alas, understandable. But we hope that they will learn to distinguish between the people who do not think in that way and the Government, yet I fear that this will not

be so in every case, and that our Press especially will attack Prussia as a whole, believing that the King, the Prince and yourself are of their party.

Queen Victoria's letters to the King of Prussia continued in a friendly vein, although she did not cease to complain of his refusal to join in the war against the Czar. Frederick William seems to have been well-disposed towards England, but he had no intention of helping the French. Still more important was Bismarck's determination not to break with Russia : the future " pilot " of Germany had quickly realised that Austria was the most inveterate enemy to Prussian expansion, and he foresaw the future advantage of a strong friendship with Russia in case of a war with Austria. To sacrifice this, in order to safeguard British interests in India, was a kind of altruism which Bismarck seldom practised. Queen Victoria might make all her appeals to honour and righteousness, but the Prussian Court had more tangible ends in view. Bunsen's successor was received courteously and Queen Victoria took the opportunity to repeat her views ; there was no agreement even over the aims of Russia. Bismarck considered that Russian eyes were always turned towards the East. Queen Victoria imagined the Czar as would-be overlord of Europe, and said so, in much the same forcible language that was to be applied in the present century to the German Emperor.

Windsor Castle.

January 11th, 1855.

Honoured Sir and Brother,

I have had the great pleasure of receiving Your Majesty's kind letter from Herr von Usedom, and of welcoming him

not only as a very pleasant and cultured man personally, but also as the man who, so You inform me, possesses Your entire confidence.

He will have told you—and I feel myself compelled to repeat to You personally—that I am exceedingly distressed to see Your policy deviating so far from the policy of England at this critical moment, and Your Majesty personally becoming separated and isolated from the rest of Europe. I foresaw that this would happen when Your Majesty cut Yourself away in March of last year from the policy which You had hitherto pursued and from the men who upheld that policy, and I have the satisfying knowledge of having warned You with complete candour both then and at every subsequent opportunity of the necessary consequences of separating from the Concert of Europe. This, however, does not mitigate my present regret at having to acknowledge that Prussia's separate policy has not furthered the general good of Europe, but will rather lead to an enlargement of the zone of the war, and to an increase in its duration and horror.

I have instructed Lord Clarendon to negotiate as freely and openly as possible with Herr von Usedom in order to promote a friendly understanding with Your Majesty's Government. I cannot however conceal from You my opinion that it is impossible to conclude a treaty with Prussia which would be less favourable to the general interests of Europe than the treaty I have just signed with Austria. Apart from this, everything which Your Majesty considers to be most in keeping with Your dignity and the honour of Prussia shall be embraced and supported on my side with joy.

What the immediate future holds in store for us the Almighty alone knows, yet I remain confident in the belief that He will reward with success all efforts to protect international law in civilised Europe and the welfare of mankind which is inherent in it from injury at the hands of brute force. This force is employed by a Power which has

in the course of this war given us every day clearer proof of having for years exploited all progress of the human mind, of having amassed and directed the physical and moral energies of millions of souls to the one end of restricting and forging the civilisation of Europe by a mighty pressure of its own purposes.

Events had turned England away from Prussia and towards France. Only forty years after Waterloo, a French Emperor was received in England with the highest honours, and Queen Victoria wrote in great excitement to tell the news to Augusta. The accord between the two sovereigns was remarkable and made an excellent advertisement for the alliance. "Of course", Queen Victoria wrote, with perhaps a touch of malice, "what contributed to making the visit easy was that our political interests are the same".

The Emperor and Empress arrived at Dover on April 16th, 1855, and were received with great enthusiasm, both there and in London. During their stay, the visitors attended a ball at Windsor Castle and a performance of *Fidelio* at Her Majesty's Theatre, lunched at the Guildhall and visited the Crystal Palace. There were also Councils of War, and Queen Victoria invested the Emperor with the Order of the Garter. The following letter gives a graphic picture of the two guests, although the Empress must have been a little stronger than she seemed, since she survived until 1920, nineteen years after the death of Queen Victoria.

Buckingham Palace.

April 23rd, 1855.

Dearest Augusta,

I am seizing a safe opportunity to tell you a little about the very interesting visit which we have just received. I

will not attempt to describe the functions, but send you a whole newspaper which contains everything. The visit, I can truly say, was a real triumph, and I do not believe that any foreign ruler has ever been welcomed with such enthusiasm. Windsor was unrecognisable, and the excitement and commotion indescribable. The sun shone all the time, and everything looked sparkling and cheerful. A week ago today (it now seems like a dream !) was a day of expectation and tension such as I cannot describe. We received the Imperial Couple with all pomp and circumstance, everything in fine style. At last, after a long wait, they arrived at seven in the evening with Albert in an open carriage. I received them with the whole court, George Cambridge, my brother, Vicky and Bertie at the door to the great staircase ; embraced both of them, presented the children, and then led them up the steps. We saw a great deal of the noble couple in the short time, and received a very favourable impression of them !

The Emperor is a remarkable, an unusual man ; on all occasions both publicly and in private, when he was quite alone with us, his manner was dignified, decorous, tactful and unbelievably calm. One would imagine that he had been educated as a Crown Prince. His manners have something which in English we call “ fascinating ” ; he is natural, very frank, melancholy and sometimes even enthusiastic. He has a great deal of German and nothing French in his character.

We talked on practically every subject. We debated the Alliance very frankly and seriously. The fact that our political interests are the same, that we are both in the same boat naturally contributed to the success of the visit.

He breakfasted with us *en famille* (the Empress, however, did not) and was very friendly with the children, especially with Arthur whom he envied us for possessing.

The Empress is a very charming, lovable creature, also

extremely tactful, yet natural, in her manner. She is not actually beautiful, but very pretty, with a charming profile and figure, and with a sweetness and friendliness that win all hearts. She was deeply touched by my affection and care for her. She is, alas, not at all strong. The country proclaimed by its attitude and its immense enthusiasm when we appeared together in public how greatly it values the alliance and desires its continuance.

I am sure you will think the Emperor's reply in the city beautiful ; he read it out to us beforehand. They seemed to be distressed at parting from us. Albert accompanied them as far as Dover the day before yesterday.

Nearly every day we receive news from Sebastopol. The decisive moment has arrived in Vienna too, and at any moment we may receive the all-important announcement.

The Emperor mentioned Queen Marie Amélie, and bade me say to her that she must travel through France if the return journey from Spain (should she go there again) is too difficult for her. And I must not forget to mention that the Emperor at all times spoke in a friendly manner of Prussia, though regretting the policy pursued by the King ; I spoke of the visit which he paid you in Baden, to which he replied " She is a most excellent person ". .



## CHAPTER V

1855-1856

WHEN the Princess Royal was sixteen years old, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were already planning a marriage for her and when the choice ultimately fell on Prince Frederick William of Prussia, the bond between the two courts became closer than ever. Princess Victoria was Prince Albert's aptest pupil. His eldest son did not accept his father's rules and regulations with grace, but the Princess was heir to her father's liking for scholarship, duty and rules, and she had already worked diligently with him, as his secretary. Prince Albert found a companion in her and he doubtless loved her more than any other of his children. But he was forced to realise that her career lay far away, and in September of 1855 there was already talk of the marriage which was being arranged for her. The first written intimation was in a letter from Prince Albert to his brother in Coburg. A few days before, Prince Frederick and Princess Victoria had ridden together at Balmoral. He had "spurred his horse forward in the narrow track until he was riding beside the Princess. They paused and he leaned over to pick her a sprig of white heather. He placed it in her hand and on the way home he told her that he loved her". Prince Albert wrote, "The

marriage cannot be thought of until she is seventeen . . . . it is to be kept *strictly secret*. Of course all the world will talk about it, but as long as we ourselves say nothing, it will not matter". Some months afterwards, he wrote, "The intended is more and more in love every day. Victoria is quite impatient about it, for she cannot imagine that the child can arouse such feelings". He added, "Vicky is very reasonable, she will go well prepared into the labyrinth of Berlin".

Queen Victoria proved herself a loyal mother in the first letter which she wrote to Princess Augusta concerning the betrothal.

Windsor Castle.

October 22nd, 1855.

My dear darling Augusta

Naturally I felt as delighted as you did when our dear children announced their mutual love for each other. September 20th will now always remain dear to me ! I was impressed and charmed by the pure, ardent love of these two innocent young creatures. Both Fritz and Vicky have thus shown such trust and faith in us that I feel we cannot thank God enough that everything has turned out so happily. Dear Fritz, how I feel for him in all the unpleasant trials and worries he has got to face. However, now that the bond is tied, nothing can really mar his happiness ; he must be fortified by the thought that Vicky truly loves him and that we parents have given them our blessing. On the whole, this match is regarded favourably, except by the infamous *Times*, which in any case has now lost all influence on account of its exaggerated and scandalous reports. Everyone is highly indignant and enraged over those vicious articles which have appeared lately. Lord Palmerston, by the way, has just been talking to us enthusiastically about the proposed marriage, and he

said : " It will be an event of outstanding importance for England and Europe ".

I have hardly ever discussed Vicky with you, partly because it seemed somewhat immodest to mention her gradual development or to praise her unduly, and also because she was so largely the object of our secret hopes and desires. However, now that God has graciously granted our wishes I will keep silent no longer and will tell you all you wish to know. Already Fritz must have told you so much about her that I can have very little more to add. She has developed amazingly of late and her visit to France proved beneficial in every way. She is now slightly taller than I am and grows *visibly*. I find her very good company and this important event in her life has now brought us even closer together. I experience everything she feels, and since I myself still feel so young our relationship is more like that of two sisters. Her health is excellent. Early this year she went through a critical time and did not suffer even the slightest indisposition. But she is still half a child and has to develop herself both physically and morally before their marriage takes place in two years' time—it must not suffer merely on this account. Admittedly it is rather long for dear Fritz to wait, but I hope he will often visit us here, alone, to see his Vicky.

I am naturally very concerned about dear Wiwy. Her health needs great attention and care since she has grown so quickly. I feel sure she ought not to exhaust her fragile nervous strength through too much mental excitement and strain. She is so emotional and so easily impressed or upset that I am afraid any great mental excitement, particularly in her present state, might have a really detrimental effect on her future life.

What I have said about Wiwy, dear Augusta, also applies to you. We are always so grieved to hear of your repeated illnesses. I wish you would promise to avoid doing anything which entails too great excitement or exertion.

Vicky embraces you affectionately, and Wiwy and I do the same. . . . Albert kisses your hand and sends his respects.

Always your devoted friend,  
V.R.

Next day, Queen Victoria wrote to Prince William of Prussia. It is to be observed that she did not use the familiar form of "Du" to him, as she did to Princess Augusta.

Windsor Castle.  
October 23rd, 1855.

My dearest Cousin

Your kind and affectionate letter made me very happy indeed. I can wait no longer before writing to thank you for it, expressing at the same time my great joy over the proposed alliance between our beloved children. Dear Augusta already knows our feelings about this event, and Albert, I believe, has also written and told you. I am afraid therefore that I may only bore you with repetition, but even so I must tell you myself how we thank God for having found such a charming and suitable young man as future husband for our dear daughter. What is more, the two children seem so attracted to each other ! I already regard Fritz as my own child for he has shown such child-like faith and affection towards me.

Please accept my warmest thanks for the generous and affectionate manner in which you propose to receive our child into your family. May she prove herself worthy of her great good fortune !

With Albert's warmest respects I remain, dear Cousin, your sincere and devoted cousin

VICTORIA R.

In the early spring of 1856 the Crimean War ended in a victorious peace for the allies. In her letters to

the King of Prussia Queen Victoria abandoned the unfruitful theme of Prussian policy, and turned instead to the happier and less contentious subject of her daughter's engagement.

Windsor Castle.

January 26th, 1856.

Dear Brother

I am all the more grateful for Your Majesty's epistle on account of Your subsequent letter which fully explained its meaning. For the first time you mentioned a certain subject, which I also regard with much interest and eagerness. You describe it as the fulfilment of Your greatest hopes and youthful dreams. Although I cannot fully appreciate the great value and the political significance of this proposed union, my chief thought is the knowledge that our beloved child will go through life's difficult journey, secure and happy in the companionship of such an honest and noble young man, in whom I have the very greatest trust. Through my own experience, I am becoming more and more convinced that the only true happiness in this world is to be found in the domestic circle. If Your Majesty had been able to witness, as I did, the mutual feeling which exists between these two young people, it would have confirmed your prayer that God Almighty might bless such a union. It comforts the natural apprehension of a mother's heart to know that when the time comes for our daughter to leave her home for Yours, she will find in Your Majesty a second loving and devoted father.

I would share Your Majesty's happiness over the news from Petersburg with all my heart if I felt any great confidence in the enemy's word. The German proverb *Gebannte Kinder scheuen das Feuer* expresses most clearly my views on this matter. The manner in which Russia, after the strongest protests, has suddenly accepted the ultimatum is so similar to their acceptance of the 4 points *pur et simple* of the previous year, that I find myself with grave misgivings.

They behaved in a similar way over the threat to Austria, if You remember. When it came to negotiating, Russia proved to have accepted the terms only in word, intending thereby to break up the Concert Européen which alone could dictate peace conditions satisfactory to all Europe. But God may arrange everything for the best !

Albert thanks you for your friendly greetings and returns the expression of sincere friendship. Always devoted and affectionate, I remain Your Majesty's faithful sister and friend

VICTORIA R.

News of the engagement was beginning to circulate among the well-informed in England ; Cobden knew in March, when he wrote to a friend, " This said Prince is a lucky fellow, and I trust he will make a good husband. If not, although a man of peace, I shall consider it a *casus belli* ". In the same month the Princess was confirmed and King Leopold came over from Belgium to be present at the ceremony. The Queen wrote again to the King of Prussia.

Buckingham Palace.

April 4th, 1856.

My dear Brother

The confirmation of our dear Victoria has taken place. She has made her vow before the altar to follow the difficult road of life as a believing Christian. Now that it is over, I feel bound once more to express my great happiness at the alliance which has joined the young child's heart with that of Your nephew. The thought, that in a short time now both our houses will be bound still closer, gives me no less pleasure. I beg you to offer the dear Queen my daughter's warm affection and my sincerest greetings.

We are extremely happy at the thought of seeing Fritz again, whom you have kindly allowed to visit us during

the month of May. He will find us in a more cheerful mood than at that time when the destinies of war weighed so heavy upon us, and whose outcome only God Almighty could foretell. May this peace be an everlasting one !

With my sincerest friendship, I remain Your Majesty's devoted sister and friend,

VICTORIA R.

Queen Victoria wrote next to Princess Augusta, describing how her sons and daughter had heard the great news. Prince Frederick was due to arrive in May, and meanwhile, Princess Victoria was about to make her *début*. The two mothers, sure in their own friendship, must have delighted in each other's accounts of every trifle that concerned their children. Queen Victoria asked if she understood why Vicky chose cornflowers for her trimming. Princess Augusta knew that it was because they were her son's favourite flowers. The only note of regret came with the thought of separation.

Windsor Castle.

April 8th, 1856.

Dearest Augusta !

As I promised I would do, I am writing to you today in detail to tell you more about those matters which concern us both so closely. But first of all my warmest thanks for your dear letter of the 5th, which I received yesterday with birthday wishes for your rather ugly god-child !\*

We have informed our relatives and many friends and dependants of the happy news. Vicky, who has had to hide the secret for so long, beams with joy to be regarded now as betrothed, because although not *publicly announced*, it is certainly rather well known. Alice, who had no suspicion of such a thing, was told first. She shows a

\* Prince Leopold, born April 7th, 1853.

touching love for her sister and tears come into her eyes when she speaks of it. Then the two boys and Lenchen were told. Bertie was particularly pleased about it and wrote to Fritz immediately. Alice will write to him today. *The missing Louise* and Arthur are to know nothing about it at present as they would not understand. Nobody is more delighted about the news than my dear Aunt Gloucester, who is now nearing eighty years of age. She is always extraordinarily kind and affectionate to our children and is truly very attached to Vicky. I am enclosing herewith a page of her letter to Mama. We told Edward\* about it yesterday and he also seemed delighted. The children are all very fond of him and always look upon him as *Cousin Edward*. Vicky teased him yesterday evening by saying he would become her uncle.

Vicky is to make her first appearance at a drawing-room the day after tomorrow, wearing feathers and train! She will be dressed quite simply in white, with a train of white antique moiré, both this and her gown to be trimmed with cornflowers. She will wear a wreath of the same flowers on her head. You understand, of course, why she chose these flowers?

Stockmar's condition has somewhat improved, but the fear and uncertainty felt for his daughter is indeed horrible! I must confess the knowledge that our dear little friend is suffering and unhappy has spoiled many a pleasant moment.

I believe that in the circumstances it is better that Peace has been declared, because our allies definitely do not wish to continue the war any longer and their troops suffer terribly. But in this country, the Peace is not popular; it is considered to be rather premature. . . .

I am sure more frequent and longer visits to England will be of the greatest benefit to Fritz. Personally, I am counting on this for the future, for otherwise—how could we bear to have our child so far away from us! My dearest friend, you speak of the separation from Wiwy, but how

\* Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar.



different will be that of Vicky for us ! But admittedly, we have three daughters besides, while you have no others ! However, you will often be able to see her, as Berlin and Carlsruhe are not very far from Coblenz.

I will finish here as I also wish to write to Fritz today. I am sending you and the dear Prince two copies of a very successful portrait of my beloved husband, which I hope you will like. The one of me I hope to be able to send you next week.

With Albert's warmest respects and our affectionate greetings to Wiwy, I embrace you tenderly and remain as always your devoted cousin and friend

VICTORIA R.

April of 1856 was a happy month for Queen Victoria. Peace was signed and the country returned to confidence and security. During these welcome celebrations, she did not neglect the plan for her daughter's happiness. When she wrote to Princess Augusta, she revealed her anxieties over the effect of new surroundings and strange people on the young girl. The life of Berlin and Potsdam did not seem at all suitable for an inexperienced and newly married couple, and Queen Victoria looked to her friend to provide the kind of protection that was needed.

Buckingham Palace.

April 15th, 1856.

My dearest friend

Thank you a thousand times for your charming and affectionate letter of the 12th ! You know how happy your letters always make me, and now, naturally, more than ever before ! How very satisfying is the feeling that both our dear children belong to us so mutually and how gladly we shall do everything so as to assure their future happiness ! How good and charming of you to say that you will let

Fritz enter our family with such absolute trust ! In the same way, I can promise you, my dear friend, that we shall give Vicky over to our excellent Fritz with the very fullest confidence and that we regard you both as parents of her future home. Nevertheless, I cannot deny that the thought of her extreme youth fills me with anxiety and misgivings ! Here I am depending on your good advice and your sweet maternal nature for support, otherwise it would be too risky to send such a totally inexperienced 17 year old child, who has been used to parental care, into a strange country to live among complete strangers. She herself somewhat fears the separation, and therefore will depend so on her environment. Albert will see if he can persuade Loewenstein to come here. However, it is rather doubtful if he would be suitable or if he is even likely to accept the position. In any case, Albert will do all in his power to pursue the matter.

Another thing which concerns us both closely is that the young pair make as short a stay as possible in Berlin, and that to begin with, Berlin and Potsdam should not be their chief residence. I should regard it as being morally and physically harmful for the first years of their marriage ! In any case, we must discuss many important and vital matters with you both and Fritz. . . .

The Queen's happiness continued all through the summer. The war was over, and the troops were returning. Fritz arrived in England to spend an idyllic holiday in Vicky's company. Prince Fritz of Baden, "Wiwy's fiance", was also in England. The Queen, gratified by the victorious peace, contented with Prince Albert, and in the prime of motherhood, found added pleasure in the happiness of her own and Princess Augusta's children. Writing to King Leopold, she said, "While Fritz Wilhelm is here, *every* spare

moment Vicky has . . . . is devoted to her bridegroom, who is so much in love, that, even if he is out driving and walking with her, he is not satisfied, and says he has not seen her, unless he can have her for an hour to himself, when I am naturally bound to be acting as chaperon ”.

Queen Victoria sent all this happy gossip to Princess Augusta, describing how difficult it was to move Fritz if he could not remain at home half the day to see Vicky. Prince Fritz of Baden was anxious to have a portrait of Wiwy done by Winterhalter, who had painted Queen Victoria in the preceding month. The separation of Prince Alfred from his brother, to which Queen Victoria refers, was due to the fact that the difference in age was considered “ disturbing in their education ”, to use Prince Albert’s words. Prince Alfred was to live in future at Windsor Royal Lodge, and “ an intelligent engineer officer ” had been engaged as his tutor.

Buckingham Palace.

June 9th, 1856.

Dearest Augusta

The young couple are as happy as can be here ! Fritz is unbelievably in love and shows such a touching faith in our child, which from some one so young was altogether unexpected and is, indeed, very flattering and delightful for Vicky. Her love and trust in him grows daily and yet she is very placid and sensible in herself. *We can see from this fact that here is a relationship, not only of great passion, but based on real trust and understanding such as should assure lasting happiness for them both !*

Unfortunately, he will not be able to await your arrival, as I had earnestly hoped. But he tells me he really cannot

stay longer than the last day of this month. I fear also that the journey to Paris may have to be postponed until late Autumn since the Emperor departs on the 20th, and the baptism of the infant prince\* is to take place on the 14th of the following month. I share your fears exactly over the reception of the new Emperor in Berlin !† How very sad !

That dear, excellent Fritz von Baden left us early the day before yesterday to pay a short visit to Edinburgh and Glasgow ; he is to meet us again the day after tomorrow at Windsor. I cannot tell you how fond we have become of him ! He is such a quiet, modest man and yet is exceptionally clever. Moreover he is so very distinguished and handsome ; everyone here likes him. He has a great affection for you and will doubtless give you much comfort and support. How glad I am that dear Luise is to have such a husband, and our children such a brother !

Our dear, good Fritz is also *a great success*. His simple, friendly manner, his obliging and courteous behaviour towards everyone have made him exceedingly popular. He has gone to Woolwich with Albert this morning, but he is so occupied with Vicky that it is very difficult to persuade him to see anything if he cannot spend at least half the day at home in order to see her !

I cannot tell you how I look forward to your visit ! Do stay as long as possible !

As Fritz writes to you so often, it is not necessary to describe our active life here. This evening we went to see the famous Ristori, and tomorrow we go to Windsor—but only for three days. Fritz must also have told you of Alfred's departure and separation from his brother.

And now farewell, dearest friend ! With Albert's most affectionate greetings I remain, as always, your devoted cousin and friend

VICTORIA R.

\* Prince Louis Napoleon, born March 16th.

† Emperor Alexander II of Russia stayed in Berlin and Potsdam from May 29th to June 2nd.

Fritz von Baden told me it is entirely for you to decide when and where Winterhalter shall paint his dear Luise.

I believe Winterhalter is in Baden at present. Would he not find more quiet and be able to paint her best at Aachen?

Princess Augusta arrived in England in the summer, shortly after her son had returned to Prussia. The two mothers were almost as happy as their children had been when they were reunited.

They appeared together for the great review of Crimean heroes at Aldershot, where 14,000 men were drawn up on the plain. The Queen "rode past them on a chestnut charger. Helmets and bearskins and shakos were flung to the sky. The dragoons waved their glittering sabres in the sun. Aldershot rang and rang again with the cry, 'God Save the Queen!'" After the review, Queen Victoria, Princess Augusta and Prince Albert went to the quiet of Osborne. There they walked in the garden and enjoyed the hot July sunshine.

In the autumn, the King of Prussia wrote to Queen Victoria, this time in a new rôle. Early in September, 1856, there had been an attempted *coup d'état* in the Swiss canton of Neuchâtel for the purpose of restoring the monarchy. The rights of "Highness" in Neuenburg were the personal property of the King of Prussia, and in spite of the revolution of 1848, he had never renounced these privileges, which had been recognised by the Powers in the London Protocol of 1852. The royalist *putsch* in Neuchâtel met with some success, and four members of parliament were captured; but within twenty-four hours the republicans

regained power and imprisoned numerous royalists. It was in these circumstances that the King of Prussia appealed to Queen Victoria for support. He had demanded that his captive supporters should be released *unconditionally*, and he wished for England's diplomatic support in this attitude.

As Queen Victoria wrote her reply, she could hardly have forgotten the reproachfully righteous tone in which Frederick William had refused to help her against Russia ; and now that the rôles were reversed she rivalled him in the sweet reasonableness of refusal. Unconditional release would amount to a virtual acquittal, and Queen Victoria could not demand this. The English envoy was instructed to pacify the republicans as much as possible ; but the dispute verged on war, until Napoleon negotiated a very wise settlement, by which the royalist prisoners suffered only banishment and the King of Prussia reluctantly abandoned his rights.

Balmoral Castle.

September 7th, 1856.

Dear and Respected Brother

Your Majesty's friendly letter dated the 8th of this month has reached me safely. I need not mention now how extremely grieved I was to hear the news of the sad occurrence at Neuchâtel, which must have caused Your Majesty much pain and anxiety. I sympathise with You most sincerely over this, but the more I do so and the more I desire to see Your Majesty's well-deserved rights in Neuchâtel recognised again, so I must continue to regret a step which was evidently very rashly undertaken and without any chance of success. The fact that it was repressed by the inhabitants themselves, almost without resistance and without the confederate troops intervening, can only be detrimental to their cause and must result in the Con-

federacy showing stronger resistance to the same. I can only wish that those who have fallen into such danger through their devoted loyalty to you will be treated with consideration by their captors. I have instructed my ambassador at Berne to inform the Confederate Government of this earnest wish of mine. Having regard to the critical position in which Graf Pourtalès and his fellow prisoners find themselves, I cannot disregard the fact that a too hasty diplomatic interference might prove more injurious than useful to them, because such an action would be regarded by the Confederation as an attack on their independence.

My Ambassador will at the same time express what satisfaction I should feel if the Confederate Government would take advantage of the present situation to secure a final settlement of the dispute with Prussia. Unfortunately, I fear that the last occurrence, although undertaken without Your Majesty's knowledge and permission, will nevertheless be associated with Berlin on account of Graf Pourtalès's influential status and recent journey there. Such a point of view would complicate this already difficult question even further.

In the present circumstances, there appears to me to be a certain procedure which would be most advisable. A meeting of the London Conference could hardly ensue before the participating Powers have come to some agreement among themselves as to how far they feel justified in interfering if a peaceful settlement turns out to be impossible. For in the event of Your Majesty's rights having to be defended by the full force of arms, and preserved by a permanent occupation of foreign troops in Neuchâtel, then the European question would be affected by the most serious consequences, about which I do not dare think—as You will readily understand.

However, let us hope that it will not come to that, but that a sincere effort on the part of all concerned will soon bring about this little land's restoration to an equitable legal status, through mutual concessions on every side !

Albert pays Your Majesty homage, and with our most friendly greetings to the dear Queen, I remain Your Majesty's truly devoted sister and friend,

VICTORIA R.

Balmoral.

October 7th, 1856.

My dear Brother !

Your Majesty's deep grief over the fate of Your loyal subjects in Neuchâtel has caused you to make a further appeal to me. And the more I place myself in Your position, the more I realise that you will do your utmost to diminish that fate. If I could actively co-operate, it would not only satisfy my personal feelings, but would also give me the special pleasure of contributing to your ease of mind, dear brother.

But, as I already said in my earlier letter, direct intervention would be more harmful than expedient at this moment. I doubt even if the Confederate Government would have the power to free the prisoners at once without a trial, according to Your Majesty's wishes, even if they so desired to, especially as legal proceedings have already commenced. If for my part I were to demand their release under threat, it would be presumed that I regarded the prisoners as completely innocent and considered their arrest to be quite unjustified. But this I can do no more than Your Majesty can. Graf Pourtales and his friends acted out of devotion to you and with the very best intentions. Nevertheless that is not enough to justify an action which Your Majesty Yourself has described as thoughtless and to relieve the leader of this enterprise of all responsibility for the bloodshed. On closer consideration, Your Majesty is sure to realise that I cannot demand the immediate and unconditional release of the prisoners on the ground that they are innocent, and this alone would entitle me to such a demand. It seems imprudent thus to provoke a negative reply and equally inexpedient on account of this, to break



off diplomatic relations. I should thereby lose all means of contributing to the settlement of this matter, which I consider could be most favourably negotiated when the investigation is over. Meanwhile, such an investigation seems unavoidable. But Your Majesty may rest assured that no efforts will be spared to secure good treatment for the prisoners during the trial and an alleviation of their sentence, whatever it may be.

I am afraid I cannot consider the case of Naples, which Your Majesty quotes, as a parallel. In that instance, hundreds of victims, and amongst them the most distinguished men of the Land, had suffered terrible tortures in the most gruesome prisons for more than seven years without a trial, or without even knowing of what offence they were accused. According to what I have heard, the prisoners in Neuchâtel have not suffered what one would call hardship, except during the first few days when they were not allowed light after sunset. My Ambassador protested against this as it came to his knowledge but found that the Confederate Government had lifted this regulation of their own accord.

Allow me, Your Majesty, to again express the hope that there will be a speedy settlement of this complicated situation, which has already brought you so much unpleasantness. And may I repeat the request that You, on Your part, will take every step to facilitate such a settlement.

With my sincerest respects, I remain as ever, Your Majesty's faithful sister and friend

VICTORIA R.

Princess Augusta's daughter was married to "Fritz of Baden" on September 20th, and in the days that followed, the Princess wrote sadly of the separation from "Wiwy". Early in October, Queen Victoria wrote to comfort her, and at the same time she discussed her own feelings for the Princess Royal with remarkable candour. This letter helps to destroy the idea that

Queen Victoria deceived herself into affecting sentiments which she did not experience. Very few mothers can have looked into their hearts so frankly, and fewer still have published what they found with equal honesty. A sentimental woman would have enjoyed inventing a grief to rival Princess Augusta's, but Queen Victoria felt deeply enough not to be ashamed of what might appear to be a lack of feeling. She found that her relationship with her children was constrained and uneasy. She was accustomed to adults, and in any case she had too many children to be overwhelmed by the departure of one. All this she confessed and she explained her attitude to Augusta without any kind of pose. She might well have added that she was temperamentally too energetic and too objective to lose herself in the life of a child.

The letter ends with a description of the most vivid personality in the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale. In January, Queen Victoria had written personally to her, expressing a wish to meet her and enclosing a special badge bearing a St. George's Cross in red enamel, and the Royal cypher surmounted by a crown in diamonds. The badge was inscribed "Blessed are the Merciful", and also bore the word "Crimea". Queen Victoria met the famous nurse in September at the house of Sir James Clark, the Physician to the Household, and she was deeply impressed by her.

Balmoral Castle.

October 6th, 1856.

Dearest Augusta

Since I last wrote to you I have received two affectionate but again rather sad letters of the 25th, the 26th and then

one of the 27th from Weimar for which a thousand thanks. I had already realised with much sorrow that this separation would affect you terribly and that the feeling of emptiness afterwards would be horribly painful and acute. But I do hope you will gradually accustom yourself to it, particularly as you were often separated from Luise for weeks on end.

With me the circumstances are quite different. I see the children much less and even here, where Albert is often away all day long, I find no especial pleasure or compensation in the company of the elder children. You will remember that I told you this at Osborne. Usually they go out with me in the afternoon (Vicky mostly, and the others also sometimes), or occasionally in the mornings when I drive or walk or ride, accompanied by my lady-in-waiting. And only very exceptionally do I find the rather intimate intercourse with them either agreeable or easy. You will not understand this, but it is caused by various factors. Firstly, I only feel properly *à mon aise* and quite happy when Albert is with me ; secondly, I am used to carrying on my many affairs quite alone ; and then I have grown up all alone, accustomed to the society of adult (and never with younger) people—lastly, I still cannot get used to the fact that Vicky is almost grown up. To me she still seems the same child, who had to be kept in order and therefore must not become too intimate. Here are my sincere feelings in contrast to yours. And this is why the separation, although in many ways very difficult and painful for me, will not be as acute and terrible as it is in your case, which is really lucky. To which I must add that I have such a number of children that I shall be provided with them for many years to come. Poor Vicky will find the separation from us and from her brothers and sisters very painful. Bidding farewell to her happy youth and her various beloved homes will also grieve her deeply for she is an emotional child. . . .

I never told you that we have made the acquaintance of the famous Miss Florence Nightingale in the last fourteen

days. She was on a visit to Sir J. Clark and we like her immensely. She has a rare presence, very simple, gentle and ladylike and modest to the last degree. At the same time she has a man's intelligence and great repose. One can see how much she has gone through. . . .

## CHAPTER VI

1856-1857

WHEN Queen Victoria first came to the throne, she enjoyed the freedom and entertainment of life in London far more than the quiet, elegant life at Windsor. But Prince Albert soon changed her taste and she slowly came to share his dislike for the "thick heavy atmosphere" of London. A year after she was married, she wrote in her journal: "Since the blessed hour of my marriage, and still more since the summer, I dislike and am unhappy to leave the country". She shared his wish for country houses, smaller and more secluded than the royal palaces which she had inherited, and they created Osborne and Balmoral together. The Queen expressed her delight over Balmoral to Princess Augusta, in a letter which she wrote in October of 1856. The Scottish castle beside the Dee was not yet theirs. They did not buy it for some years afterwards, but they enjoyed it as their "home". They loved the mountain solitude "where one rarely sees a human face". Queen Victoria wrote to Princess Augusta at the close of their summer holiday. Another letter followed when she had returned to the "energizing" air of Windsor.

Balmoral Castle.

October 14th, 1856.

Dearest Augusta!

The last week, actually the last ten days have been glorious here. Every year we grow more and more attached

to these magnificent mountains, to the great loneliness, to the pleasant quiet and freedom here, and truly it makes my heart bleed to have to tear myself away from it all. For now there is everything here—the house, the beautiful grounds, all the creation of my dear Albert, which we have seen take shape before our very eyes. We have made use of the last nine or ten days to be outside a great deal, five, six or seven hours a day. Last week, we spent a night and two days up in the hills by Loch Miuck where it was glorious. Albert has had great luck at deer-stalking and has killed twenty-nine very fine stags. And now this is all over ! We travel to Edinburgh early tomorrow at 9.30, and the day after tomorrow we go to Windsor where everything is so stiff, formal and full of etiquette, even somewhat like a prison, and the air there is very depressing. However, we must be grateful for what we have enjoyed.

You shall have a detailed reply to all your questions and remarks when I write from Windsor at the end of the week. . . .

Windsor Castle.

October 21st, 1856.

. . . We have safely completed our big journey of some six hundred miles in two long days. But how I feel the difference in the climate here ! The Windsor air is extremely enervating and it is also very hot so that I feel scarcely able to drag myself about. Moreover, the atmosphere is so damp that one has to go in much earlier in the evenings than up in my beloved, glorious highlands where half my heart still remains ! I can understand the homesickness of mountain people only too well ! . . .

It is not easy to realise that Queen Victoria enjoyed the devotion of a half-brother and half-sister in her early years, although one knows that the Duchess of Kent was married twice and that she already had a son and daughter when she married the Duke in

Coburg. Queen Victoria had a great affection for her half-sister, Princess Feodora, and for her half-brother, Prince Charles of Leiningen, although marriage took them into a smaller German world, away from the Queen's interests. But the fondness remained, and when Prince Charles died in the winter of 1856, the Queen shared her sorrow with Princess Augusta. The Duchess of Kent was still alive, and she kept up a little court at Abergeldie, at Frogmore and in London. This was the first family bereavement which the Duchess and the Queen had suffered since the death of the Duke of Kent, while Queen Victoria was still a baby. On November 18th, the Queen wrote of her grief but a few days afterwards, she described her life more cheerfully. Princess Victoria and Prince Frederick of Prussia were staying with her at Windsor and November 21st had been the Princess's birthday. The letter which the Queen wrote to Princess Augusta described their life together and it revealed, once more, the frankness which enriched her correspondence with her friend in Prussia.

Windsor Castle.

November 18th, 1856.

. . . I am in such poor spirits and my heart and soul have but the one sad thought! I have lost my only and dearly beloved brother and nothing can compensate this loss. The thought that I shall never see him again in this world is so terrible that I can scarcely bear it. Since my birth, one might almost say, my poor dear brother has spent a long time with us every year (with one or two exceptions), and he had become half English! Thank God my dear mother is as well as could possibly be expected,

still calm and quiet, but her grief is acute ! It is terrible to lose a beloved only son at her age.

Dear Fritz is so good and sympathetic, but I am so sorry for his sake that he should visit us at such a moment. It must be so dull for him, especially as Vicky feels so grieved that she has made herself quite ill. She cannot console herself. She loved this uncle dearly and he showed an equal affection for her, so it has been a dreadful shock. It is her first real sorrow and she cannot grow used to the idea that she will never see him again. . . .

Windsor Castle.

November 26th, 1856.

. . . Naturally the 21st could only be celebrated quite quietly but nevertheless quite happily, and Vicky was content to be surrounded by so much love and affection. Your fear that Fritz only sees her with the younger children is quite unfounded because the latter only appear at breakfast and luncheon and leave immediately afterwards. Vicky, however, always goes out with us and Fritz in the afternoon. She also sees him every day from six to seven undisturbed in the adjoining room and eats with him in the evening. Although Fritz has certainly not had the opportunity of making much acquaintance with English society this time, we ourselves have become very intimate with him on account of our secluded life here, eating alone daily and spending the evenings together. We have had many interesting and confidential conversations with him quite *sans gêne*. I feel that he has grown much nearer to us and we regard him quite as a member of our own family. In London during the season this is quite impossible. One never sees people quietly and alone, and there is no opportunity for any intelligent and serious conversations, or any likelihood of continuing them regularly. What I mention here explains many of the complaints we made at Osborne, and this time we find your dear son is quite prepared to



enter into all earnest and important conversations. His love and good nature and the friendship with which he treats us, and our <sup>16</sup>family and relatives, I cannot praise highly enough. . . .

VICTORIA R.

One of the disadvantages under which Prince Albert had always suffered was his lack of prestige, as being what he once described as "merely the husband" of Queen Victoria. In the early days, he had resented the persistent humiliation put upon him and when he was consoled by the passing of the Regency Bill, he expressed great happiness to his brother. In the summer of 1857, Queen Victoria finally removed the injustice by creating him Prince Consort. She bestowed the title upon her own initiative and thus relieved her mind of a long-standing grievance. "I should have preferred it being done by Act of Parliament", she wrote, "and so it may still be at some future period ; but it was thought better upon the whole to do it *now* in this simple way". Behind these words lies a history of obstruction on the part of Ministers who had been reluctant to introduce the necessary legislation, sometimes through malice and sometimes through apprehension.

Queen Victoria's argument, set out in a memorandum of 1856, was unanswerable. Prince Albert, "the *husband* of a *Queen regnant*", was entirely ignored by the law which prescribed for him "no rank or defined position". The Queen went on to give instances of the embarrassments which had been caused and she added, with innocent disregard of the fact that she had placed the first restraints upon him, "When I first

married, we had much difficulty on this subject ; much bad feeling was shown, and several members of the Royal family showed bad grace in giving precedence to the Prince. . . . While last year, the Emperor of the French treated the Prince as a Royal personage, his uncle declined to come to Paris avowedly because he would not give precedence to the Prince ; and on the Rhine in 1845 the King of Prussia could not give the place to the Queen's husband which common civility required, because of the presence of an Archduke, the third son of an uncle of the then reigning Emperor of Austria, who would not give the *pas*, and whom the King would not offend". There had also been an amazing scene with the King of Hanover, more ludicrous than humiliating, in 1843, at the London wedding of the Grand Duke and Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. This was best described by Prince Albert himself, in a letter to his brother. "It almost came to a fight with the King", he wrote. "He insisted on having the place at the altar where we stood. He wanted to drive me away and, against all custom, he wanted to accompany Victoria and lead her. I was to go behind him. I was forced to give him a strong push and drive him down a few steps, where the First Master of Ceremonies took him and led him out of the chapel".

"We had a second scene", Prince Albert continued, "when he would not allow me to sign the register with Victoria. He laid his fist on the book. We manœuvred round the table and Victoria had the book handed to her across the table. Now the table was between us and he could see what was being done. After a third trial to force Victoria to do what he commanded, but

in vain, he left the party in great wrath. Since then, we let him go, and happily, he fell over some stones in Kew and damaged some ribs ”.

A situation which could give rise to such unseemly brawling was ridiculous and intolerable. This was not the only disadvantage which Prince Albert suffered. There was a more insidious danger which Queen Victoria recognised when she wrote, “ the children may deny the position which their mother has given to their father as a usurpation over them, having the law on their side ”. This last was unlikely in a prince of Albert Edward’s character, but Queen Victoria knew the unique jealousies which beset princes. She knew also the traditional opposition of royal heirs to their parents. Perhaps Queen Victoria realised the temperamental antipathy between her son and her husband. She was anxious to save the Prince of Wales from facing the temptation of ever taking advantage of his father’s undefined position. The Queen’s view was that the title of *King* was inappropriate but, she added, “ upon mature reflection, and after considering the question for nearly *sixteen years*, I have come to the conclusion that the title which is now by universal consent given to him of ‘ Prince Consort ’, with the highest rank in and out of Parliament, immediately after the Queen, and before every other Prince of the Royal Family, should be the one assigned to the husband of the Queen Regnant *once and for all* ”.

The Queen had discussed the question with different Prime Ministers and Lord Chancellors and all had “ invariably agreed ” with her. But nothing had ever been done about it. She had sent her Memorandum

to Lord Derby, and she had asked him to undertake the necessary legislation. Lord Derby had promised the Queen his "cordial support" but he had questioned the expediency of raising a discussion on such an important matter "during the short remainder of the present session of Parliament". The matter was shelved but, in the following year, Queen Victoria decided to be firm. She exercised her own authority, careless of what might be said in the House of Commons or in the Press. She conferred the title by Royal Letters Patent. Formal notification was given to all foreign Courts, but Queen Victoria wrote personally to Princess Augusta, in July.

Buckingham Palace.

July 3rd, 1857.

Dearest Augusta

We returned from Manchester yesterday feeling very enthusiastic about the whole expedition, which also seems to have interested and intrigued our dear Fritz immensely. On the 30th, the crowds of people lining the tastefully decorated streets exceeded almost anything I have ever seen, although I have attended so many receptions of this kind. Their enthusiasm and affection were quite astounding, and they showed great friendliness towards Fritz. I enclose a description of it herewith, also one of the ceremony at the conferring of the Victoria Cross and Albert's speech on education which he delivered on the 22nd, and which I am sure will please you.

I am sure it will interest you to hear that I have bestowed on my beloved husband the title of "Prince Consort."\* He has been called thus by the public for a long time, although not officially. It seemed to me very wrong that my husband should bear a foreign title which gave him

\* On June 25th.

On June 25th.

quite a false status, particularly abroad, so I decided to bestow this title on him which is to be formally announced in all foreign courts. Here is the extract from the newspaper. May I ask you to acquaint the dear Prince and also Fritz and Luise with this news? . . .

During the summer of 1857 there were many royal visitors to England, including, of course, Prince Frederick, who came to see the Princess Royal. The Queen of Holland stayed for one night and King Leopold of the Belgians brought his daughter, the ill-fated Charlotte, a few weeks before her marriage to the Archduke Maximilian. In August, the Emperor and Empress of the French stayed at Osborne for a few days. This visit was at the express desire of the Emperor, who wished to strengthen the Anglo-French Alliance. The days at Osborne gave the Queen great pleasure, which she shared with Princess Augusta in a letter.

At the end, Queen Victoria wrote of the health of the King of Prussia who had for some time been showing signs of mental disturbance.

Osborne.

August 12th, 1857.

Dearest Augusta

. . . Now I will tell you about the very friendly and enjoyable visit of the Imperial Couple,\* who are extremely charming people. To save time I enclose a description of our activities.

When they landed on the morning of the 6th the weather was magnificent. The country looked refreshed after a

\* Emperor Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie stayed at Osborne from August 6th to 10th. Their political discussions were chiefly centred on the Eastern Question.

sudden strong rain overnight, and the numerous ships and boats in the harbour presented a marvellous sight. Albert and Alfred (it was his birthday) met their Majesties on the *Reine Hortense* and accompanied them to the pier below, where I was waiting with the two girls and duly received them. We drove off straight away and breakfasted with them and then went out walking together. They occupied your suite. In the afternoon we went for a drive; on the following morning their Majesties inspected the farm and various agricultural instruments and machines *en détail*, and showed great interest despite the abominable weather. In the afternoon the weather was better, although not very pleasant, and we went for a short trip on the *Victoria and Albert*. On the next day we walked and drove out again despite terrible showers, and in the evening we gave a delightful little ball in a marquee outside. Towards midday on Sunday we attended church and in the afternoon we went out for a drive. On the 10th at noon we showed the Empress over the Swiss Cottage,\* and at two o'clock they embarked again, the weather was superb—we accompanied their Majesties on board and bade a very charming farewell.

In spite of the important guests, our dear Osborne retained its secluded and simple character. Our mode of living remained quite the same, even where the little ball was concerned. Everyone seemed quite delighted with the place and the countryside, and the Emperor, who had previously visited the island, was enchanted with every view and flower garden he saw. No one could be more simple, pleasant and unselfconscious than they both are. The Empress is really most charming, not only because of her beauty (and I have never seen her more *en beauté*) but equally because of her graciousness, her intellect, her naïveté and kindness of heart; she is so pleasant and intelligent to talk to. Albert has a very great respect for

\* This was a miniature Swiss chalet, built in the grounds of Osborne as a play-house for the royal children.

her, and the children adore her, particularly Vicky and Alfred. She and the Emperor have taken much notice of them and are very fond of young people altogether. At the ball the Emperor danced with Lenchen, who beaming with joy, clasped the Emperor very tightly *for fear of losing him*, or so Vicky affirms ! The Empress's gowns are charming but extremely simple, and she wears a formal crinoline in the evening ! Until the last day she never came down to breakfast !

The visit has also been of great political importance ; the existing difficulties being overcome, we have discussed these very frankly together. It seems impossible to avoid meeting the Tsar as he has already proposed the visit so often ; in any case, one must not fret about it too much.

It was almost like a dream to see the Emperor and Empress here in peaceful Osborne. Albert said to me the first evening as he came out of the dining-room and saw them standing there, " I must look very carefully so as to make certain I'm not dreaming ! "

13th. I have not been able to finish your letter before today. We are very glad to hear that the King is better ; his illness seems to have been really serious and I fear his present condition is still not quite satisfactory. . . .

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert moved from Osborne to Balmoral in the autumn and, from the seclusion of the Scottish home, which she loved so much, the Queen wrote a long letter to Princess Augusta, telling of her children and of her friends. " Bertie ", the Prince of Wales, had been allowed a little freedom from the apron strings and he had made a favourable impression on the Continent. He had met Prince Metternich. Princess Augusta's daughter, wedded the previous year, had just borne her first child and Queen Victoria hastened to give the benefit

of her experience and to commend the advantages of fresh air. There were other matters for comment. Princess Charlotte was now married to the Archduke Maximilian and she had written to the Queen. There had also been letters from Alexandrine, the wife of Prince Albert's elder brother. The letter impresses upon us the close family ties and interests of nineteenth-century monarchy.

The Princess Royal was nearing her marriage to Prince Frederick and the thought of leaving her life in England for the unknown experience of the Court in Prussia were distressing her. Queen Victoria wrote a touching description of her, paying farewell visits to the scenes of her childhood. Although the Queen had confessed to a lack of intimacy in the relationship with her daughter, this did not prevent her from showing a richly sympathetic understanding of the feelings of the girl who was so soon to be an exile in Prussia.

This letter also contains the first reference to the Indian Mutiny, which had been gathering force during the summer. Queen Victoria had received full details of the atrocities at Cawnpore, just before writing this letter, and her anxiety was increased by news of the defenders of Lucknow. It was not until November that Lucknow was relieved by Sir Colin Campbell.

Balmoral Castle.

September 5th, 1857.

Dear Augusta,

I thank you warmly for your 2 dear letters of the 19th and 28th (which I received yesterday) and from which I was delighted to see that you are now well and that Luise, too, is recovering ; only I hear that she is still looking very pale ; I hope that being a great deal out of doors will make



her quite strong again. The way in which luckless women in childbed are usually treated in Germany has as its result that they emerge pale, weak and wretched from the treatment, not from the thing itself, and need a long time to recover from the nursing.

We are very glad that you found Bertie grown bigger, better-looking and *improved*; we hear that he made a favourable impression upon those who made his acquaintance in society, as, for instance, Prince Metternich, etc. But we should be very grateful to you if you would let us know what you hear on the subject. I hope very much to hear something soon from the good Countess Blücher. She has, I suppose, seen a great deal of Luise? Alexandrine wrote me that a photograph of your grandson had been taken; I should very much like a copy. I will shortly send you one of our dear little one,\* which was taken in June; for the rest, for more than 2 months she has been sitting upright, and is really a darling little baby, so fat, with a skin like satin, great blue eyes and the tiniest little mouth you can imagine; and besides, she is so lively and good-tempered.

Vicky was not quite well on the journey and during the first few days here; her stomach was a little out of order, chiefly as a result of the agitation of the dear 26th, and of leaving dear, beautiful Osborne, where she has now spent her last happy summer as an innocent child in the happy group of children. Even when one has every reason to be quite happy as a wife, yet, all the same, the severance from childhood is very grave and sad, especially when one has to leave one's home. The poor child feels this very deeply and the slow tearing of oneself away from the best loved places and loveliest memories is a hard trial, which must naturally have some effect upon her health. We naturally feel it too, but do our best to keep Vicky from dwelling on all these things and by reminding her how often she will see her home and how often she will spend our birthdays

\* Princess Beatrice.

with us. Fritz has written to her very nicely and sympathetically about this, which is doing her a great deal of good. She is now quite well again and is taking a great deal of exercise in this splendid air and glorious surroundings.

8th. I continue my letter today. In church today we heard a quite beautiful sermon by W. Caird, the same clergyman whose sermon 2 years ago made such a sensation and was translated into German and French.

Uncle Leopold was most delighted to see you again, for he admires you extremely. I have not heard from him again since Baden. I had a most happy, natural letter from dear Charlotte recently from Venice. Yesterday evening I heard from dear Luise, who seems to be in absolute ecstasies over her baby. The air of Badenwiler is said to be particularly fine and strengthening. We are very grieved that our valued, excellent friend St. [Stockmar] is still unwell ; unfortunately he never took any care of his health.

The Grand Duchess Hélène I have always heard described as a very clever and cultivated woman. Alexandrine gave me a description of her sister's confirmation, which she (A.) takes terribly to heart, as I find quite understandable.

I was sure of your sympathy about India ; the position there and the hideous, unheard-of murders, massacres, which occurred there, and unspeakable cruelties done to the poor ladies and children depress us profoundly and cause us great anxiety ; we are almost incessantly occupied with them, as well as with the measures to be taken and armaments. It is far worse than the last campaign ; that at least was a glorious, honourable war, but this is against your own people, whom you have trusted, and there is hardly a family who has not either lost a relation or is not in anxiety about them ; this is more amongst the gentry and middle Classes, than in the very highest Circles, there are few [text has "fond"] of those as yet. Some poor people have 3 sons in India, either in the Military or Civil Service, and all equally exposed to be killed. Poor

Sir G. Cowper, who is with Mama, has 2 sons, and one is in Lucknow with his wife and children. Lucknow is being besieged (*sic*) by the Mutineers (*sic*), but we hope that it will soon be relieved.

. . . Now I must close this letter, which has really grown too long, and which I can only conclude today, the 17th.

With Albert's warmest greetings, and praying that you will remember us most kindly to your brothers and sisters,

Ever your most faithful cousin and friend,

V.R.

You will be glad to hear that Mama is extraordinarily well.

## CHAPTER VII

1857-1859

EARLY in October, it was obvious that the King of Prussia could not reign for very long. His mind was failing and on October 23rd his duties were taken over by his brother, Prince William, the husband of Princess Augusta. The insanity which cast such a cloud over the King's closing years is easy to comprehend, when one studies the story of his reign, with the perspective of time. The changes which came to Great Britain slowly and with careful experiment had come violently to Prussia. Frederick William's reign was marked by conflict between the old conception of divinely sanctioned, absolute monarchy and the sudden arrival of radical and socialist doctrines. It was his personal misfortune to oscillate between the two, giving way with fine gestures, when he was forced to do so, and then snatching back all he could from the burning, when the sense of divine right suddenly stirred in him again. The secret of ruling is to give to the people, as a privilege, that which they will soon demand as their right. King Frederick William never realised this—he was confused between what he had been taught as a child and what he was being forced to learn as a mature man. He wavered, therefore, and he lost the trust of his people. One has only to turn back to the story of 1848 to realise the distressed state

in which he was obliged to rule. It was then that he was compelled to promise a new constitution, and a crowd assembled before the palace to cheer the concession. The people were unwilling to disperse and soldiers were brought on to the scene. The accidental discharge of two harmless shots undid all the good of the promised concessions, and panic and riot followed. Barricades were thrown up, the soldiers were attacked and, for a day and a half, Berlin was given over to violence. The King had ordered a banner to be hoisted over the palace with the word MISUNDERSTANDING on it in huge letters. The situation was beyond control and, through a second "misunderstanding", mistaken orders led to the troops being withdrawn outside the city, leaving the King in the power of the people. They crowded to the palace with their dead and commanded him to come down and see the grim harvest. It was not until the bearers began to enter the palace that he appeared, with the Queen, to be greeted with humiliating cries. It is some guide to the reason why he was never able to establish his dominion again, when one reads of him being forced to ride through Berlin in a procession, flying the revolutionary colours. When it was realised that his reason had failed, there could have been little surprise among those who considered the circumstances of his reign.

Balmoral Castle.

October 13th, 1857.

Dearest Augusta

Please accept our warmest and heartfelt sympathy, but we beg you not to look too gloomily and despondently towards

the future, whatever may happen ! Why should you be so afraid ? May God keep the dear Prince well and strong and help him at this difficult and fateful moment ! How grieved I feel for the poor Queen who is so passionately devoted to the King ! And how sorry we are for the poor King himself, who was always very friendly to us ! During the day we are sure to hear further news, but I must admit that his condition seems very serious. Do not agitate yourself too much ! Otherwise you will make yourself ill and being far from home that would be most distressing. . . .\*

Towards the end of 1857 the final arrangements for the marriage of the Princess Royal were being made. There were difficulties to disturb the Queen and, in October, a rumour reached London that leading Prussians might object to the marriage taking place in England. There was no official sign of the objection, but Queen Victoria did not wait to protest and she wrote to the British Ambassador in Berlin, in her most downright manner. "The assumption of its being *too much* for a Prince Royal of Prussia to *come over* to marry the *Princess Royal of Great Britain* IN England is too *absurd*. . . . Whatever may be the usual practice of Prussian Princes, it is not *every* day that one marries the eldest daughter of the Queen of England. The question therefore must be considered as settled and closed". Few sentences she wrote during all her life give us such a full view of the will that was able to override those who dealt in "expediency", a word which the Queen hated all her life.

The Queen made another objection in December, when she wrote to Princess Augusta suggesting that it would be a mistake for Princess Victoria to make

\* Princess Augusta was then staying at Coblenz.

her first public appearance in Berlin at a theatre on Sunday. Public opinion in England would not approve the affront to sabbatarian observance, she said, and the British Ambassador, Lord Bloomfield, would not attend. This letter is an interesting revelation of the unremitting care with which Royal persons must walk. It is also interesting to note that the Queen did not share the view of her subjects on Lord's Day Observance. We are reminded that it was through her insistence that bands were first allowed to play in Hyde Park on Sundays.

Windsor Castle.

December 28th, 1857.

Dearest Augusta

I first intended to write to you the day after tomorrow, only I now feel anxious for you to have this letter as soon as possible. There is a matter to which I should like to draw your attention, and the Prince's as well. Among those engagements proposed for Victoria's journey, which Fritz has kindly noted down for me, I find quoted :— Sunday 7th, Church and *Théâtre Paré*. Now of course, Victoria will never make difficulties where following the manners and customs of her new country is concerned, nor will she allow her own habits to influence them, particularly since these do not really disagree with her own feelings or with mine. But I must admit that if Victoria's first public appearance were to take place in a theatre on a Sunday—as you know many over here hold the most extreme views on the religious observance of “The Day of the Lord” (views which I never could share), and all observe the Sabbath as a day of complete rest—it would offend people in this country to such a degree that could only be harmful to Victoria and Fritz and would produce ill-feeling against Germany in general. It would naturally be regarded as an intentional demonstration. People would either say

that having left her native land, she immediately forgets all her religious duties, her childhood's teaching and the respect she owes to them, or else they would think that someone had influenced her feelings very ungenerously, and that she had been forced to act against her better judgment. For instance, Bloomfield certainly would not appear, and this happening right at the beginning would have a bad effect and might even compromise me as well. Therefore I sincerely hope that it will be possible to postpone the *Théâtre Paré* to another day. Anything else on Sunday except a theatre or a dance would not matter, but the present arrangement is certainly ill-suited to Victoria's début.

You have no idea what a deep concern this country shows for Victoria, just as though she were their own child, and everyone is anxious that she should be happy and well-received in her new fatherland. So it is very important to me that nothing should happen which could cause displeasure or disapproval here. She can do all that later without anything being said about it. I enclose a charming little poem which I cut out of a newspaper and which will prove how deeply interested people feel. Please show this letter to the Prince and Fritz ! . . .

The Princess Royal and Prince Frederick William of Prussia were married in the Chapel Royal on January 25th, in the presence of thirty-five Princes and Princesses. Prince Albert and King Leopold escorted the bride to the altar and the nation was pleased over the wedding of "England's daughter", to quote Cobden's apt phrase. The bride and bridegroom were genuinely in love, and Queen Victoria was happy because of the new bond between herself and Princess Augusta. Among those who were capable of cooler judgment, there was satisfaction over the important alliance



between the two countries. King Leopold, who had fostered the fortunes of the Coburg family for so many years, was delighted, but Bismarck resented this new achievement by the family which he described as "the stud farm of Europe". He began to assume the hostile attitude towards the Princess which made her so unhappy during her life in Prussia. These shadows of the future were not seen in 1858, and the letters written by Queen Victoria, Princess Augusta and King Leopold show that they rejoiced in seeing their three daughters happily married. The days of childhood were ended for them. "Wiwy" was already a mother, Charlotte was happy with Maximilian, and Princess Victoria and Prince Frederick were contented in the first months of their marriage. It seemed that they were able to forget that they were the victims of a radical age which held a tragedy for each of them. In the meantime they enjoyed their happiness and their parents enjoyed it with them.

Prince Albert was the only one who seemed to suffer in the separation from his daughter. He travelled to Gravesend to see her depart. Afterwards he wrote to her, "My heart was very full when yesterday you leaned your forehead on my breast to give vent to your tears. I am not of a demonstrative nature . . . you can hardly know how dear you have always been to me".

Windsor Castle.

January 28th, 1858.

Dearest Augusta

Thank you a thousand times for your dear, affectionate letter from Calais which I received yesterday morning. I

have missed you so much, my beloved sister, and when you and Alexandrine left here I just collapsed ! You gave me such support during these important days, and the interchange of thoughts and feelings with you always has such a beneficial and comforting effect on me.

But now I must tell you about our newly married couple. Yesterday at 1 o'clock we all drove off in glorious weather and at the station we met both the dear children, who greeted us very affectionately. Vicky in a grey poplin dress, a groseille velvet hat and a plaid shawl, handed me a pretty bouquet. She looks marvellous and is blissfully happy, Fritz also. One cannot describe what a wonderful sensation it is for us both to see these dear children so happy and contented. They both have the most childlike trust in us, and Fritz has thanked us for all our arrangements, which he can now fully appreciate. He says he does not wish to leave England and is very sorry he cannot remain longer, and we also feel this. It is such bliss to see our beloved children so happy ; Vicky's joy and simple unaffectedness are quite charming, and she behaves as though she had already been married a long time. Yesterday she said to me, " Instead of being estranged from you, dear Mama, this has brought me closer to you ! " And it is quite true. I thank God a thousand times for the conviction and inner peace which I now feel. Since my own marriage I have not experienced a more blissful feeling than now when I see the love of these pure young people. I cannot write about it without emotion, as my shaky handwriting proves.

They and Albert and the rest of the children have gone skating today, and after luncheon is Fritz's investiture.\* This evening there is to be a great banquet in the Waterloo Room.

We are so sorry that you had such a bad channel crossing !

Now, my dear darling Augusta, I must close this letter and add the warmest greetings of my beloved husband.

\* With the Order of the Garter.

His great joy over the happiness of the young married couple is really touching. I also am *thankful* in the widest sense of the word ! Always your devoted friend

VICTORIA R.

Buckingham Palace.

February 3rd, 1858.

My dearest Friend

They have really gone ! I still feel very upset, and the parting yesterday was horribly painful, particularly as we were so indescribably happy together this last week. The dear child had become more like a sister to me than a daughter and showed such faith in me. Moreover, the relationship between us and Fritz was so beautiful, so inspiring and in every way so satisfactory that I regard these days as among the happiest of my life ! The dear child behaved so remarkably, with such dignity and calm and yet with such unaffectedness that everyone was astonished and charmed by her. Marriage has made her into a woman who fully understands her position in life, and who at the same time has retained her innocent girlish simplicity. We therefore feel very reassured about the future. Fritz shows great tenderness and sympathises with her in all she feels, which is a great consolation and comfort for the poor child. The enthusiasm yesterday was indescribable. Despite the fact that it was snowing, thousands of people gathered outside here and many began to cry. I parted from her downstairs in the hall and I also wept as much as I could. But the feeling of melancholy and exhaustion afterwards is all the greater. Alice sobbed loudly and so did the little ones ; Mama, who was also there, and the Duchess of Cambridge were very distressed too. Albert and the boys went on board with her and there the final parting is said to have been really terrible. My beloved husband feels this very deeply as he loves his daughter beyond measure and she, quite rightly, worships her angel father !

Buckingham Palace.

February 13th, 1858.

My dear respected Cousin and Brother\*

I must thank you at once for your very cordial and friendly letter and express, in the name of dear Albert as well, our deep thanks for the truly parental way in which you and Augusta have received our beloved child.

We and the whole country here feel extremely pleased about our daughter's friendly and enthusiastic reception everywhere in her new fatherland. This is certainly some consolation for our parting, which I cannot deny is a painful one. But what consoles us even more is the certainty that she will be lovingly treated by you both, and that she feels so happy with her dear and admirable husband. She cannot praise his great goodness, his tender care and attention too highly, and this is also reported from other sources, although we have already seen enough ourselves to require no further proof. Dear Cousin, please tell him on our behalf how happy this makes us and how we thank God that our dear child is in such secure hands! We feel very proud that Vicky is so popular and that she has fulfilled her task so well. However, I do hope that she will soon be able to enjoy her domestic life in peace because too much exertion and emotional strain will attack the nerves eventually, and one becomes mentally tired quicker than physically.

With the warmest respects of my dear husband and our affectionate greetings to dearest Augusta, I remain always your faithful cousin and sister,

VICTORIA R.

There is a gap in the correspondence between Queen Victoria and Princess Augusta during the early months of 1858. The excitement of her daughter's wedding died away and the Queen and Prince Albert turned to the less engaging complications which followed the

\* To the Prince of Prussia.

attempted assassination of the Emperor Napoleon. The plot had been hatched in England, and France used the opportunity to manufacture accusations against the English. A period of mutual recrimination followed and the carefully nourished alliance showed signs of collapse. Queen Victoria wrote to Princess Augusta in June, but without enthusiasm. The letter has a weary sound, with its wish for seclusion—scarcely a complimentary wish, since plans were already complete for Queen Victoria to visit Princess Augusta five weeks later.

Buckingham Palace.

June 29th, 1858.

Dearest Augusta

Please accept my warmest thanks for your dear letter of the 18th which made me very happy! I am very busy at present, especially as we only have six more days (Praise God!) in London, and on account of the terrible heat I have suffered severely from headaches. But now these have been better for several days. London is very unhealthy on account of the dreadful state of the Thames which smells so frightful that hardly any one can live nearby. We went on the river yesterday for a moment to see the "Leviathan" and the smell was dreadful!

Altogether I am longing for a rest. Every year I feel less and less desire for the so-called "worldly pleasures", and if it were not my duty to give receptions and banquets, I should like to retire to the country with my husband and children. But still, everyone has their duty and this of mine is certainly not the hardest! . . .

In July, Queen Victoria learned that her daughter was pregnant and in the following month, with the Prince Consort, she set off for Germany. There was an interlude in France, at the request of both the Emperor

and the British Cabinet! The Queen and Prince Albert paused in Cherbourg, to be greeted by the Emperor. But they went on before the parade of military and naval strength which had been prepared for them. Prince Albert recorded his impressions in a letter to his brother. "As the festivities there (Cherbourg) in reality include a glorification of the army and navy against England, we do not intend to take part in them. We shall leave before they begin and only pay a personal visit".

As the train carrying Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort arrived at Hanover, the Queen's old governess, Baroness Lehzen, waved to them from the platform. But the once powerful woman, who had done more to mould the Queen's mind than anybody else, was not encouraged beyond this and the train went on to Brandenburg, where Princess Victoria was waiting. In the days that followed, mother, father and daughter recaptured some of the old family life at Balmoral and Windsor. They had much to talk about, much to admire and much to criticise. But the Queen thought that her daughter seemed "low and nervous" and she was anxious at the idea of her having a child so soon. The sorrow of separation became more real to them when they parted from their daughter in her own home, an unfamiliar place to them, in a foreign country. For Prince Albert, this fresh break was "very painful". Queen Victoria was able to see King Frederick William, but his mind was feeble and his kingship nominal. It was to Prince William that she sent her letter of thanks when she returned to England.

Hotel de Bellevue,  
Deutz.

August 20th, 1858.

Dear Cousin

Count Goltz, whom you so kindly asked to accompany us to the frontier, will bring you this letter in which I must try to express our deep gratitude for the unforgettable and glorious days that we spent under your roof with you both and the dear children, but there are no words that could ever describe my real feelings. We felt happy and at home with you in the truest sense, and I still cannot believe that all this is over so soon and that now only the pleasant memory of it remains !

My greatest wish will be to return as soon as possible, and I cannot express to you how touched and glad we feel over our warm-hearted and friendly reception everywhere in Prussia.

It was the same during the whole return journey and here also ; this evening the good people of Cologne have illuminated the town magnificently. This morning it rained very heavily, but it cleared up in the afternoon so that I was able to take my drive through the town with Prince Hohenzollern (who has been very charming and friendly to us). Albert also went for a walk incognito through the town, accompanied by our cousin Alexander Mensdorff. This morning we visited the cathedral and the Gurzenich Saal.

The separation will be very painful to us ; only as we left you dear people in Magdeburg did I realise what this separation actually meant. Ah, it is hard to have to live so far away from one's dear children ! We are still in the same country, but tomorrow, with heavy hearts, we shall have to leave Germany !

Once more let me thank you both (this letter is also for dearest Augusta to whom I am unable to write today) for all the love and kindness you showed us during our wonderful stay at Babelsberg. May I commend to you our

beloved child, who has such a devoted affection for you both, and for whom you have shown such a truly parental sentiment. May God always bless and protect her, and her good Fritz !

With my dear Albert's warmest greetings, I remain,  
always your faithful sister and cousin

VICTORIA R.

We depart tomorrow at 10 o'clock and hope to be in Osborne Tuesday evening.

On January 27th, 1859, Princess Victoria gave birth to her first child, the boy who was to become the Emperor William II. Queen Victoria poured out her feelings to Princess Augusta, but her anxiety was unnecessary, for her daughter soon recovered and three days after the birth the Queen was able to write to King Leopold, "Everything goes on so beautifully, Vicky recovering as fast and well as I did, and the dear little boy improving so much and thriving in every way". She wrote to Princess Augusta on January 30th.

Windsor Castle.

January 30th, 1859.

My dearest, beloved Friend

From our telegram you must already know how extremely glad and happy we feel at the birth of our first grandchild, and how grateful we are to God for his blessing. But we were sorely grieved and worried to hear of our dear child's extreme suffering and of the poor baby's life being in such danger. Oh God, what difficult, terrible hours you dear people must have experienced ! It is all the more frightful for those watching and waiting because they can do nothing to help, and although they feel the greatest anxiety for her safety they must hide their feelings from the poor sufferer ! It is very hard for her poor husband who experiences this



anxious ordeal for the first time, and I feel heartily sorry for our good Fritz !

All doctors agree that there is no explanation for such a case, which is indeed very seldom found, but they say that it is not dangerous for the mother and never occurs again with the same person. Dear, beloved Augusta, how can I thank you for the beautiful and moving letter which you wrote immediately after your fearful and upsetting ordeal ! Our mutual grandson binds us and our countries even closer together ! I feel so thankful that I would not wish to complain of anything, but it is particularly grievous to me not to have been nearer my own beloved child during the most difficult hours of her young life. And now having to sit here far far away, unable to see her and her little child even for a moment, this is almost more than I can bear !

We have just come back from church where the good Dean of Windsor preached an impressive and moving sermon, and where we thanked God for His divine grace ! I am sending you the prayer and will also send the sermon later. The interest everywhere is most touching and gratifying. I will also send you several newspaper articles which will doubtless please you. Perhaps you would show these to dear Fritz and have them read out to Vicky. The enthusiasm in Germany must be tremendous and we feel proud and happy that it is our child who has presented this son to your country. I am enclosing a letter from dear Queen Amélie who takes a keen interest in the happy event. Mama is writing to you herself ! And now farewell dearest friend ! May God bless you all ! Your ever devoted cousin and friend

V.R.

Vicky appears to feel quite as well and to recover herself just as quickly as I always did. What a blessing she had chloroform ! Perhaps without it her strength would have suffered very much !

At the end of May, Princess Victoria visited her

parents in England. She was strong again and Queen Victoria wrote of "our *great, great* happiness to have dearest Vicky flourishing and so well and gay with us". On her return to Prussia, she found a court which was less gay than the English. In August the King of Prussia's mind and health were weaker still, and Prince William was officially appointed Regent before the end of the year. There was a rumour that the King might be brought to England for the winter, but the project was abandoned and Queen Victoria wrote sympathetically of the troubles that beset the Court, recalling the old, happy days at Sans Souci, where the King had lived.

Osborne.

August 20th, 1859.

Dearest Augusta

Ah, how sad is the state of the poor King ! It will either get worse very quickly or else the poor man will recover enough to lead a sick invalid's existence, in any case a frightful life for him and all those who love him ! I feel so sorry for the poor Queen who has been such a devoted wife to him ! Please tell her from us both how grieved we are for her sake and for the sake of the dear King, who was always so kind and friendly to us !

I can see Sanssouci (*sic*) before me now and relive in my imagination that beautiful and unforgettable visit, remembering each separate day and even the marvellous weather we had there. Those were memorable, glorious days ! In any case, if God wills it I hope to see Germany again next year.

Windsor Castle.

November 30th, 1859.

Dearest Augusta

We heard with interest and sorrow of the poor dear King's

intention to come to England for the winter. Who could have thought that we should see him and the Queen again under such circumstances. We will be only too delighted to do all we can to make them comfortable without obtruding. . . .

## CHAPTER VIII

1859-1860

IN December, 1859, Queen Victoria wrote her first letter to Prince William in his capacity as Regent. Frederick William lingered on for another year, but he was incapable of taking any part in State affairs.

During 1859, the attention of Europe had been concentrated on the war which France and Sardinia had waged successfully against Austria. King Leopold had foreseen that Louis Napoleon would take advantage of Italian nationalist aspirations to attack Austria, but the warnings which the King of the Belgians sent to Vienna had been ignored. The battle of Solferino broke the Austrian resistance and the Peace of Villafranca followed, on July 11th. Fear that Prussia might intervene on Austria's behalf had a comically chastening effect on both parties. Napoleon was not prepared to fight Prussia ; and the Emperor of Austria preferred to have his power in Italy curtailed, rather than recognise Prussia as an equal. The two opponents were conspicuously polite to each other, while England and Prussia watched, with misgiving, another triumph of the unstable Emperor of the French.

Windsor Castle.

December 2nd, 1859.

My dear Cousin,

You wrote me a dear letter on November 2nd by the

precious children, and today I am giving them a letter to take back to you. I thank you most sincerely for the great happiness which you have given us by allowing this visit. To have the dear children peacefully with us for a few weeks and to be able to watch their domestic and marital felicity was extremely refreshing to my mother's heart. They will be able to tell you our news more fully and more pleasantly by word of mouth than I can in writing, and so I will not bore you with a long letter; but I must not leave the political part of your letter unanswered.

I fully appreciate the attitude which you consider it your duty to assume in regard to the Italian question, and that you wish to maintain the principle of legitimacy in the Duchies.

While Prussia often defends this principle, though yielding from time to time when it is a question of political changes, we in England uphold another principle, namely, that every people has a right to choose its own character and form of Government. This principle has grown up with our history and our constitution. But since you say yourself that Prussia cannot contemplate drawing the sword in favour of the legitimacy of the Duchies nor even of the Pope, there is fundamentally no reason why our policies should not march hand in hand.

Palmerston and John Russell, it is true, are enthusiasts in the Italian cause, and the Press outstrips even them; the former is true to his hatred of Austria, and you are bound to feel sympathy, if not for the Pope, at least for the dispossessed Dukes:—but at the Congress (if it should still take place) they will be more concerned with finding a practical solution of these endless difficulties and complications than with disputing over principles of sympathy. But here we are prepared to forego our wish for a large Kingdom of Northern Italy under Sardinia, although such a kingdom would have been quite advantageous both to England and Prussia. It seems to me not improbable that they will find a solution by forming another state from the

alliance of Tuscany, Modena and Romagna. But the unfortunate dynasties will have to be provided for.

But I must now take leave of you, and remain, as always,  
Your loyal friend, cousin and sister,

V.

In May, Queen Victoria was at Osborne for the celebration of her birthday. The weather was unusually kind, and Queen Victoria wrote delightedly to King Leopold, "The foliage of many trees is hardly out yet, but there are all the fruit-trees in fullest blossom—the lilacs and peonies out—the thorns only beginning and every wild flower in profusion—the grass splendidly green, and a fragrance about everything which is too delicious; and the birds singing *most* beautifully. The nightingales were last night singing all round the house. . . ."

These were days of happiness, and Queen Victoria's mother had fortunately suffered no recurrence of the illness which had marred the previous year's celebration. Overcome by thoughts of her good fortune, Queen Victoria wrote to Princess Augusta as if she were counting the blessings that had been bestowed on her. The idyllic sweetness of the letter gives an added poignancy to the fact that the following year was to rob her of both her mother and her husband.

Osborne.

May 26th, 1860.

Dear Augusta,

I fear that it is too late for my answer to leave today, yet I cannot wait to thank you most cordially for your dear letter of the 20th and for your pretty present. I know how to appreciate your loyal friendship and love, which I have

enjoyed since 1846, and you, dear friend, know also how much I reciprocate your sentiments !

Although we were sad to be without two of our dear children, I was so grateful for the presence of my dear mother (this time last year we were in such distress and anxiety about her), that we spent the 24th in more than usual gaiety and good spirits. Where could I point to another woman who after 20 years of such marital felicity still possesses it ? My dearly-beloved Albert shows me not only as much affection and kindness as ever, but as much love and tenderness as on the first day of our marriage. How can I ever repay him for it ? How be sufficiently thankful to God for His goodness ? And I must also count as a blessing the love of our many good children ! For this truly rejoices the hearts of parents who only desire their children's welfare. Dear, good Vicky so touchingly expresses, even from a distance, her love and attachment to us.

The weather was beautiful. We had music on the terrace, and in the evening there was dancing and merriment, just like nine years ago. Dear Mama was able to join in everything.

Early in 1860 Napoleon set all Europe thinking again when he annexed Nice and Savoy as the price of his intervention in Italy. *Annexander* was King Leopold's sobriquet for his old enemy. A reference to France's "natural frontiers" had been given its full meaning in Prussia, and the Prince Regent tried to avoid the interview which Napoleon sought with him. This eventually took place, at the Fürstentag in Baden Baden during June, but only after an agreement that German territory was to be regarded as inviolable.

Queen Victoria was increasingly alarmed by French pretensions, and urged Prussia to be ready in its

own defence. The interview was thought to be dangerous, but it passed off in an exchange of courteous platitudes.

Buckingham Palace.

June 13th, 1860.

. . . We are exceedingly sorry that the dear Prince finds himself after all unable to avoid the interview with the Emperor Napoleon which he had at first parried by his nobly patriotic efforts. The interview is desired by the other side, and is therefore calculated in the other side's interest and not in the interest of himself and Germany, and all those who have helped it forward have taken on a serious responsibility. The Emperor will teach Frenchmen to regard German territory as their own property ; there is no doubt that he will assume ownership of this territory, and there is equally little doubt that Germany, to avoid hopeless disgrace, must defend herself to the utmost. Therefore everything which may lead to doubts about Germany's determination in this respect is a real misfortune, and the adversary will leave no stone unturned to stimulate these doubts.

/In July, 1860, Queen Victoria was able to speak of the likelihood of an engagement between her daughter, Princess Alice, and Prince Louis of Hesse, afterwards the Grand Duke Louis IV. The engagement was not formally announced until December, but it was known earlier among the royal family, and the Queen wrote of it to Princess Augusta in November.

Windsor Castle.

November 3rd, 1860.

Dear Augusta,

Although Vicky will have certainly given you the glad news of Alice's engagement, I must do it myself, and beg



you also to inform the dear Regent on our behalf. I cannot tell you how overjoyed we are at this event, for dear Louis is an excellent person ; he has such an upright, sincere nature, so much kindness, he is so alert and cheerful and at the same time so modest. God will surely bless this union as He has the union of our children, for they are so deeply devoted to each other, and it is really beautiful to observe their happiness. The good, exquisite Alice is radiant, and everyone is infected by her ill-concealed joy. I am still quite overcome by the whole affair, and can only thank God again and again. I am so overwhelmed with letters that you will perhaps be so good as to convey the good news to dear Luise on my behalf together with my sincere congratulations for this dear day. . . .

The death of poor, dear Bunsen is very sad. He was always so good to us.

## CHAPTER IX

1861

THE year 1861 was one of successive bereavements, each one more calamitous for Queen Victoria than the last. Her New Year greetings to Prussia had scarcely been sent before news came of the death of the King, followed immediately by a full account from Princess Victoria. The last phase of the King's illness had begun as the old year passed. In the first hours of the new year, Princess Victoria and her husband hastened on foot and unattended through the streets of Berlin, to be near him. In the palace "we stood, not even daring to sit down, watching the death-struggle", Princess Victoria wrote to her mother. "I never spent such an awful time! And to see the poor Queen sitting there quite rent my heart—three, four, five, six, seven struck, and we were still standing there. . . . The light of the morning dawned, and the lamps were taken away—oh, how sad for the first morning in the year! We all went into the next room, for I assure you, anxiety, watching, standing, and crying had worn us out. The Princess (Augusta) fell asleep on a chair, I on a sofa, and the rest walked up and down the room asking one another, How long will it last?" The King lingered through the day and then he was "at rest at last after all he had suffered".

Osborne.

January 2nd, 1861.

Dear Cousin and Brother

I never suspected when I wrote by Alfred to wish you a happy New Year how soon I should be writing to you again on such a painful and solemn occasion ! You know already through Augusta how close I am to you in my thoughts, and how I pray to God to bless you and your reign, and to succour you !

I can truthfully say that no one wishes this more sincerely than myself, who have enjoyed your friendship for more than 16 years, and have been for 3 years on terms of the closest intimacy with you ; you who were always so kind and brotherly towards us ! Let us preserve these sentiments, dear brother, and let us always be instrumental in bringing our peoples closer and closer to one another ! Although at times differences of opinion may arise between us, yet the interests of both countries, their religion and their outlook, are so similar that I am certain they will be united by an ever-strengthening bond.

We grieve sincerely over the dear, departed King, who was always so kind and good to us, and whom Providence so sorely tried.

With my most cordial good wishes to Augusta, I remain, dear Brother, ever your loyal sister and friend

VICTORIA REG.

The crown of Prussia passed to Prince William and Princess Augusta, and Queen Victoria might reasonably expect a firm alliance with England to be a certain feature of Prussian diplomacy. Augusta's husband was sixty and thought of himself as an old man whose active life had passed. Perhaps he would not live long, but even so his death would bring " Fritz and Vicky " to the throne. In 1861 how certain it must have seemed that English influence would have great weight in

Prussia throughout the remainder of the century. King William, however, falsified his own prophecies by ruling for thirty years and becoming one of the most illustrious sovereigns in German history. Guided by Bismarck, he evolved a policy which found little accommodation for the advice tendered by Queen Victoria.

Windsor Castle.

January 23rd, 1861.

My dear Brother

I am writing to you today to ask you if you will allow me to admit you into the Fellowship of the Knights of the Garter, and to despatch the order to you? You know the circumstances which have prevented me until now from giving you this public proof of my esteem, and can readily imagine the satisfaction which I feel in being now able to follow my own wishes.

General Bonin yesterday handed me the official notice of your accession, and I welcomed him with pleasure as a true and devoted servant to yourself.

Once again I repeat my good wishes for your welfare and for your reign, and remain ever your loyal sister and friend

VICTORIA REG.

Two months later the hand of death came nearer. King Frederick William of Prussia had suffered only a release from incurable insanity, and it would have been hypocrisy to lament his decease. On March 15th, however, there was anxiety for Queen Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent, following an operation on her arm; and within twenty-four hours she was dead. Queen Victoria's grief was passionate and overwhelming. During the long vigil in the sick-room she was persuaded to retire and try to rest until she was

called, but she could not. Lady Augusta Stanley has described how three times the Queen "stole downstairs with her little lamp, in her white dressing-gown, and knelt kissing the hand and whispering 'Mama' so lovingly and earnestly as if the sound must rouse her".

Queen Victoria spoke of herself on that day as "a poor broken-hearted child". Even her husband's habitual self-control was overcome, and he was seen to be in tears. When Queen Victoria wrote to Princess Augusta, the first shock had abated, but the calmer grief which followed did not mark any lessening of her profound sorrow. "This is a life-sorrow", she wrote to King Leopold; and again, "the *blank* becomes *daily* worse".

Windsor Castle.

March 27th, 1861.

Dear precious Friend

I am sure you are not offended with me for not writing to you earlier, but even now it is terribly difficult for me to do so. Yet I wanted so wholeheartedly to thank you for your affectionate letter of the 16th (that dreadful, yet sadly beautiful day).

God has sorely tried me, I am deeply stricken, and so far have found no consolation! I am not actually ill, but my nerves are terribly upset and I can only bear the most complete quiet. To lose a beloved mother is always terrible, and the blank can never be filled, that you know. But when you consider that this mother has lived for no one and nothing but me, that for 41 years I have never been separated from her for more than three months, that she was the gentlest, most tender and loving creature that one can ever imagine, and that her heart, like none other,

was always full of loving kindness for outside people, then you can imagine how immeasurable is my loss and my grief! May God be ever praised that my beloved mother fell gently asleep, and that even in death her dear hand was clasped in mine! I cannot write any more today. Dear Vicky will tell you every detail. I beg the dear King to forgive me for not writing to him also. I am so grateful for his letter.

May God be with you! Think of your unfortunate friend! Ever your loyal cousin and friend

V. R.

My dear husband has been a veritable angel of goodness to me in this terrible time.

Queen Victoria's next letter to Prussia was once more on a melancholy theme. Though his reign was only a few months old, King William had been exposed to attempted assassination, by a Leipzig student. The Crown Prince, as Princess Victoria's husband had now become, interrupted his stay in England and hurried to his father, carrying this letter of sympathy from Queen Victoria. Happily, the King was not seriously wounded.

Osborne.

July 14th, 1861.

Dear, beloved Brother

Words fail me in expressing my consternation at the frightful attempt upon your life! God protected your dear life! May the Lord be praised a thousandfold for this! But how terrible, how agonizing for you, for dear Augusta, and for Luise and Fritz! From my heart I congratulate you that everything passed off so mercifully, but I know from experience what a painful impression these things leave behind. I hope that you are not suffering from bruises, and that you are quite well! Our dear Fritz is

hurrying over to you, and will bring you this letter himself. I hope he will soon come back to us ! We are very happy when we have our children and grandchildren with us.

God be with you, dear Brother ! Ever your loyal sister and friend

V.

Queen Victoria's last letter to Prussia in this sorrowful year ends pathetically, with the almost prescient wish to be spared further sorrow. Alas, the phrase " This last terribly sad year " was prophetic. Within a month Queen Victoria had to face the most terrible blow of all.

Windsor Castle,  
October 29th, 1861.

Dearest Augusta,

You so sweetly expressed the hope of seeing us next year, D.V., a hope which we sincerely reciprocate. We would like to persuade you and the King to come to us for the opening of the Exhibition, which is also to take place on May 1st, like the " dear Exhibition " of 1851. Will you give this message to the dear King on our behalf ? God grant that nothing may prevent this and that this last terribly sad year may be followed by a year free from anxiety ! . . .

## CHAPTER X

1861-1862

AT the time when Queen Victoria's life was apparently secure, in spite of the bereavements of the preceding year, Prince Albert died. He had become the chief source of her contentment, as a sovereign as well as a wife, and with his death at Windsor her happiness ended. Now that we are allowed an historical view of this dark year in her story, we comprehend the bitter loneliness of the years that followed with greater kindness than her contemporaries gave her. Her cry, "There is no one to call me Victoria now" was more than the sad complaint of a widow. She had come to honour her husband's talents and she had learned to depend upon his judgment in all things. She idolised him as a husband and, as her adviser, she revered the unique qualities of his mind. Prince Albert had combined these merits with a saintly character and immaculate behaviour as a husband.

As the years passed, Queen Victoria tried to recover from her melancholia and during the terms when Lord Beaconsfield was her Prime Minister she knew comparative peace of mind again. But the weight put upon her was inhuman and we know through her letters, as her contemporaries did not seem to understand, that it was a miracle that her will and her mind survived her bereavement.



Soon after Prince Albert's death the Queen went from Windsor to Osborne. For a long time she brooded over her tragedy. "The things of this life are of no interest to the Queen", she wrote. "Without her dear angel" she had no wish to live. She hung the Prince's portrait, wreathed with *immortelles*, over the pillow next to her own. She sat in a room to receive her Ministers with a bust of her husband on the table beside her. A little later she wrote that she saw the "trees budding, the days lengthen, the primroses coming out", but that she still thought herself in the month of December. "She wastes and pines", she wrote, "with a broken and bleeding heart, and with but *one* consolation—to *rejoin him* again—*never to part*".

In spite of the burden of her obsession, the Queen showed signs of self-discipline. At the time, Ministers and friends did not believe this very generously, but she tried to work at her desk and to perform her duties. Early in February she began to answer the hundreds of letters which had been sent to her, and among the first which she wrote was one to the King of Prussia.

Osborne.

February 4th, 1862.

My dear Brother

As I have not written to you since the sun of my life went down, I do so today, instead of thanking dear Augusta for her last affectionate letter. But please do this on my behalf, and also accept my thanks for your warm sympathy.

Ah, dear brother, what can I say except that my poor heart is broken for ever! I feel only half-alive because, for me, life came to an end on December 14th. I do not even know if it is one day or seven weeks since I lost him, my hero, my glorious and exceptionally great husband, at the

peak of his power and vigour, in the very prime of life ! My life and thoughts depended entirely on him ; my own ambition was to please him, to be worthy of him ! The burdens, worries and difficulties of my position, which never had an attraction for me, were made bearable through his goodness, his wisdom and his guidance ; one has to thank him, and him alone, for all that is done. He supervised the children's education, he managed our household and home ; in short, he was the life and soul of everything ! And moreover, the most loving, tender husband, the most delightful and instructing companion there has ever been ! As for me, I depended on him body and soul ! And now I am left alone with my poor children and my many worries, becoming weaker and thinner every day. I work and fight hard, but the acute yearning and desire for him tear at my heart and will give me no peace ! My only comfort is the hope that I may soon be able to follow him and then be united with him for ever !

In spite of this disconsolate and yet truthful description of myself, I can assure you that as long as I live I shall take pains to preserve the best understanding between our two countries and to carry on as my beloved Angel would have wished ! I would also beg you to continue your esteemed friendship with the poor, unhappy widow of your great and noble friend, and with our children, when I no longer exist !

May God keep and bless you and our beloved Augusta and our dear children and grandchildren !

I remain, always your faithful but sorely grieved sister and friend

V.R.

The second Great Exhibition was opened in London on May 1st, 1862. Queen Victoria was firm in her intention that no member of her family should attend.

The Prince of Wales was to follow the plan his father had made for him. He was already travelling in Egypt and the Holy Land, and he was unable to help the Exhibition with his patronage. The Commissioners were naturally anxious for its success and, in March, Queen Victoria made the suggestion that her son-in-law, the Crown Prince of Prussia, should attend the opening ceremony. Since his marriage, he had come more closely into the English picture, and he was known and liked in London. This fact induced the Queen to write to the King and ask that his son should be allowed to come to England and give the Exhibition the royal patronage which it needed.

Windsor Castle.

March 26th, 1862.

Dear Brother

I hope you will consider this request that I am going to make with your usual friendliness, and fulfil it if you possibly can. Lately, it has often been pointed out to me how very essential it is for Fritz to be present at the opening of the Exhibition, which takes place on May 1, and I have been asked to try and induce him to come.

My own grief makes it impossible for me or my children to participate at all in the opening festivities, and already some of the public here have expressed their fear that my family's and my country's mourning may not only cast a deep shadow on this marvellous enterprise, but could actually injure its success.

For this reason the Royal Commissioners have urgently requested that Fritz should be present at the opening. Yet I cannot very well ask him myself. He has been over here only recently and has already promised to appear at dear

Alice's wedding towards the end of June. Both visits he has undertaken only for my sake, and I cannot demand the sacrifice of yet another journey in the same year. On the other hand, you will understand how important it is to me that this exhibition in which my dearly-beloved angel took such a keen interest, should pass off brilliantly in every way. Therefore, I am approaching you with the request that you should send Fritz as chief representative of Prussia at the head of the official Prussian Commission, so that he can attend the opening ceremony in this capacity. I ask you to do this out of your friendship to me, well knowing that it is a big request I am making. But if I beg you to do this purely for *my sake* I am convinced that you will not refuse.

If you can make Fritz's visit possible in this way, it will not only be a personal favour to me, but will also fulfil an earnest wish of the greater part of this nation. The urgent request made by the Royal Commissioners and all concerned, including the Government, shows without doubt that it would not only be very advantageous as regards the Exhibition itself but that it would also create the most favourable impression in this country. I also make this request to you in the name of my most beloved Albert. Fritz knows nothing about it yet.

With my very affectionate greetings to Augusta, I remain,  
dear brother, your faithful but unhappy sister and friend,

VICTORIA R.

Osborne.

April 23rd, 1862.

Dearest Brother

My telegram will already have told you how grateful I am that Fritz is coming, and now today I want to give a more detailed expression of my thanks. I and the whole country recognise this favour as a fresh proof of your friendship and graciousness towards us. Fritz's presence, both as your son and ours, will have a most important

effect on the Exhibition at such a gloomy time. Nevertheless, this marvellous enterprise has suffered severely through the tragedy which has befallen us, and it makes the great void caused by the decease of my own much-glorified Albert all the more perceptible, not only in this country but even throughout Europe !

This country has the greatest respect for Fritz, not only for personal reasons but because he is happily married to our child, and so I am sure he will be made heartily welcome. I also hope and pray that his presence will not only be of great benefit on this special occasion and favourably influence the progressive development of agricultural and industrial life in many lands, but also that his visit will help to bind both our countries even closer together and teach them to value and respect each other all the more.

Regarding Fritz's presence everything shall be done as you desire ; I enclose herewith the procedure which has been agreed on in this respect. I still cannot even think of the first of May which we had originally anticipated with such keen interest. Of course, it could never be the same as eleven years ago, when the first grand experiment was entirely the work of my beloved Angel, but nevertheless we had hoped to have you and dear Augusta with us and to view together the progress which the industries of all lands have made in eleven years.

All worldly pursuits are very grievous to me at the moment ; but as long as I live I shall always try to do everything as my great and beloved husband would have wished. Although invisible, I am convinced He will be near us on this occasion as at other times.

On that particular day I shall arrive with my poor, fatherless children at Balmoral, at the place where everything, even down to the smallest detail, is somehow associated with Him and His memory. Barely six months ago we left there together in the best of health, and now—what a return !

Thanking you again for your great kindness and begging

you always to retain your friendship for me, I remain, as always, dear brother, your faithful but unhappy sister and friend.

V.R.

The animated correspondence between the Queen and her friend Augusta naturally suffered during the weeks following the death of the Prince Consort, and it was not until late in May, after Prince Frederick had come for the opening of the Exhibition, that the Queen found the courage to answer the many letters which her friend had sent her. She had moved her sad little court from Osborne to Balmoral, where her memories of all that her husband had done still pressed upon her. They had made and loved Balmoral together and her letter showed no abatement of her grief.

Balmoral.

May 26th, 1862.

Dearest Augusta

You must forgive me for not answering your two affectionate letters of the 1st and 29th March any sooner ! But all my letters seem so empty now, so sad and melancholy, and the world and its wild activities truly mean less than nothing to me. I am so dead to all the usual interests of mankind that I feared I should only bore you by writing, dearest friend ! However, the sweet letter you sent me for my unhappy birthday was so full of love and sympathy that I can wait no longer before writing to embrace you and to thank you a thousand times. I thank you also for that pretty little picture.

My dear Augusta, for me everything is finished now ! I only lived through him, my heavenly Angel. Surely there can never again be such a union, such trust and understanding between two people. I can truly say that He was my entire self, my very life and soul, yes, even my conscience if I can describe it thus ! My thoughts were his,

he guided and protected me, he comforted and encouraged me. Moreover, he cheered and animated the whole house with his constant good humour and his rare, wonderful mind !

Now I feel as though I am dead ! I endeavour to do what is right, and try at least to prevent anything which would not be according to his wishes but alas the vital power is finished. Disheartened, I continue my gloomy sorrowful life alone. I can feel no interest or pleasure and my one desire is that I may go to him soon, very soon ! My nerves become more frayed and broken the longer it lasts ! Time galls me all the more ! I try to console myself a little with the thought of his present bliss, of all the beautiful and spiritual joys which now fall to his share. I try to comfort myself by knowing that he is always near me, although invisible, and that our future union will be even more perfect and eternal ! But my nature is too passionate, my emotions are too fervent, and I feel in sore need of someone to cling to securely, someone who would comfort and pacify me ! The longing for intercourse, the desire to see and hear him, to throw myself into his arms and find peace and security there (as was the case for twenty years), all this is too frightful and galls me day and night !

This is a sad description but a very true one ! The children are good and loving, but I do not find their company the same and it is no support. Moreover, I can only have two with me at a time and I still take my meals in my own room. I feel extremely weak, I can only walk slowly and not very far ; but I always take two drives and a short walk during the day. Here everything is more painful and grievous than anywhere else.

The Angel of Death still follows us. The Grand Duchess of Hesse\* has just died and so now Alice's marriage† will be

\* The Grand Duchess Mathilde, wife of Grand Duke Louis III, died on May 25th.

† The wedding of Princess Alice and Prince Louis, afterwards Grand Duke Louis IV of Hesse, took place on July 1st, 1862.

even more gloomy. Thanks be to God, Uncle Leopold is really recovering ! Ah, we should really be destitute if he also were torn from us. . . . May God bless and protect you ! Always your faithful but completely shattered sister and friend

V.R.

Our dear Fritz is so good to me and a real support.

Early in 1863 those who lived near the Queen saw the first signs of conquest over her misery. There was still "the look of sorrow and suffering", but there was also "calm decision and high resolve and energy". The approach of the marriage of her eldest son stimulated her interest in life, but, in December of 1862, all the frightening depths of her grief were stirred once more by the first anniversary of the Prince Consort's death. Her friend Augusta again became the focus of the Queen's misery and, in a letter written on December 16th she recalled the emotions which had overwhelmed her two days before, when the anniversary was celebrated by a service in the Mausoleum at Frogmore.

Windsor Castle.

December 16th, 1862.

My dearest Friend !

I was deeply touched by your two affectionate letters of the 11th and 13th, and also by the wreath which you sent for his dear, precious grave. It will be placed there by me the day after tomorrow when we all go to pray at the grave.

Those beautiful words and this proof of your love and respect for Him have been of great comfort to me. But you have always been such a loving, faithful friend to us ! You always had such faith in my dear Angel so that I know how to value your sympathy now. I long to see you again,



dear Augusta, although I would be sad, boring company for you ! I have grown very silent and absent-minded of late ; one solitary thought dominates me when I am not busy, and actually I am overwhelmed with business of all kinds. Would it not be possible for you to come here next summer for a few days (if I am still alive) ? I should probably be here for the greater part of June, and you would thus be near enough to London to make excursions there during the day, and yet we should still have each other's company here. I do hope we shall be able to arrange this !

One cannot describe the utter misery of these days (which, as you say yourself, are bound to be tedious and desolate). At the moment I feel weak and disheartened ; I have lived through a difficult, joyless year and now I must start another one with my nerves shattered and my body utterly enfeebled. All I look forward to is the future reunion with Him ; my only comfort is in the constant spiritual communion with Him and in the endeavour to fulfil His wishes. To work for Him, to honour his memory more and more, to have memorials raised in His name—here is my only consolation, or rather the only encouragement that helps me to do what lies in my power ! But I can do no more !

On Saturday we went to St. George's to lay wreaths on his resting-place for the last time, and on the 14th we had a very moving and beautiful service in his beloved chamber. The children, Lady A. Bruce and Mrs. Bruce, widow of the General, and her faithful sons were present ; the service was conducted by that excellent Dean Stanley and was very impressive. Late in the evening he again read out several prayers, and then when I was finally alone I went to the dear, holy chamber (as I do every evening before going to bed). I felt overwhelmed by the most acute pain and longing and desire. Ah, it is there that I feel so utterly alone, and know that I shall always be alone until we are reunited eternally, never to be parted again ! Tomorrow at 12 o'clock the Mausoleum will be consecrated with due

solemnity in our presence ; on the following day its great treasure will be laid there and we ourselves shall go there in the afternoon. When you come we can go together ! The cast of Marochetti's wonderful statue is to rest on the sarcophagus for the time being ; it is truly a masterpiece. You will receive a photograph of it. The dear, excellent Blücher has given me such comfort and support. Ah, God has given me many loving friends besides my dear children, and the sympathy and affection of the whole nation is really touching. I send you today a book of great merit which has been compiled and published by Mr. A. Helps\* under my personal direction ; he is an excellent author. It will certainly interest and please you. Please accept it as a Christmas present ! . . .

\*The principal speeches and addresses of H.R.H. the Prince Consort, London, 1862.

## CHAPTER XI

1863

THE Prince of Wales was married to Princess Alexandra in St. George's Chapel, at Windsor, on March 10th, 1863. The interests of the wedding had drawn the Queen away from her self-pity, but she could not help comparing the happy state of the young couple with her own loneliness. She had been pleased with her daughter-in-law from the first day of their meeting ; and when Princess Alexandra eventually came to England, the Queen had found her to be an apt and obedient pupil. Much hung in the balance. The worries of politics and international relationships changed from year to year, but there had been no abatement nor change in the Queen's anxiety over her heir. The strange and inevitable barrier which grows up between sovereigns and their eldest sons had robbed their relationship of much of the beauty that might have been possible, had they been an ordinary mother and child. Queen Victoria had high hopes of her son as a married man. She imagined that his restlessness would pass and that he would assume some of the principles and habits of her adored husband. That her son's nature was different from that of his father never seemed to occur to her. Yet she continued her programme of advice and correction, and when he was away in Palestine she had chosen the opportunity to

bring Princess Alexandra to England and instruct her in the way she should assume her responsibilities as a wife. "I am sure she will do what is right, fearlessly", the Queen said afterwards, when her days of tuition were over. She had noticed the serious, pious books beside Princess Alexandra's bed and she had been pleased and encouraged when the Princess came to her and told her that she was anxious "to improve herself in every way to be of use to Him".

The marriage was not well received in Prussia. Bismarck was not pleased to have this sign of an alliance between England and his small northern neighbour. The King of Prussia and Queen Augusta had nevertheless shown their own pleasure over the union by attending the celebrations of the wedding at the British Embassy in Berlin. Queen Victoria's first letter to the King thanked him for this sign of friendship.

Windsor Castle.

March 12th, 1863.

Dearest Brother

Our beloved Fritz has given me your kind affectionate letter and your best wishes for the marriage of our son, for which very much thanks. I am bound also to thank you and Augusta most sincerely for having visited the English Embassy on the wedding day.

Ah dear Brother, what a sad, dismal ceremony it was! How very different to that unforgettably beautiful one on January 25th, 1858! Ah, but then my mother and my angel of a husband were with me and there was nothing to mar my happiness! Now all is over with me. My present numbed existence is not a real life at all, and it is difficult to watch his children starting off on their own lives

when one feels so utterly dead oneself ! And yet how happy and wonderful all this *might* have been !

However, I wish to say nothing more about myself ! My dear Albert's longfelt desire has been fulfilled and may God bless the young couple and guide them along their path of duty, which alone leads to true happiness !

I could not venture to express myself further on the subject of your home affairs, but please rest assured that I am following every step with great interest and fully sympathise with you over the many problems with which you have to deal. It is certainly difficult to satisfy everyone. I have always found that one accomplishes the most by exercising extreme patience, and that even the least sensible people will appreciate tolerance. Moreover, if one is prepared to show at least fairness and respect towards their opinions, they allow themselves to be easily guided. Before I close I would like to beg you not to take the present state of affairs too much to heart, or your dear health might suffer.

I shall watch our dear children leave with a heavy heart, and I thank you for having allowed them to come here.

I remain your ever faithful sister and friend

V.

In May of 1863, Queen Victoria was at Osborne, and while she was there she wrote to her friend, planning a visit to England in June.

Osborne.

May 3rd, 1863.

Dearest Friend

The very thought of seeing you again gives me untold pleasure, all the more so because you were His faithful friend and He both loved and respected you ! But you will have to make allowances for me, dearest friend. I feel so utterly shattered, and my time is very occupied, as everything is such a burden to me, that I cannot show you the hospitality I should like to. You also know that I do not appear in

society because neither my health nor my nerves could bear it, as I find I need the greatest quiet. Apart from that my deep mourning would prevent me. . . .

There was one more letter to the Queen before she came to England, but, with its sentences of welcome, there were already signs of the impending strain in the relationship between England and Prussia. Three years of international distress had begun. Poland was restless under the Russian yoke and was struggling to be free. Then came the fears of Austria as she contemplated the growing power of Prussia, under the "blood and iron" control of Bismarck.

Prince Albert had looked upon a strong Prussia as a necessity in European affairs and the Queen did not turn from this view, in spite of the anti-Prussian policy of some of her Ministers. The Queen's fears were introduced into her letter of welcome.

Windsor Castle.

June 10th, 1863.

Dearest Augusta !

My warmest thanks for your two loving letters of the 5th and 6th containing the good news that you are coming. It will be a sad and mournful meeting I fear, but to have your company and to be able to talk to you will be extremely gratifying. My Angel loved and respected you so much, and you are so intelligent and experienced that it will be a real comfort to have intercourse with such a mature and intimate friend, more especially because I am only used to the children's company now ! Everything shall be arranged as you wish and Alfred will have the pleasure of receiving you at Dover since Bertie, who would otherwise have gone, has a long-standing invitation with Alix to go to Oxford

on that day and so cannot be back in time. All your suite, including Dr. Brandis (whom I shall enjoy meeting again) will be accommodated at the castle.

How sad and alarming is the news from Berlin ! My God, how will it all end !\* Our children ought to go away and keep quite apart from it all so that they do not have to participate themselves. I have told Vicky this in my letter. I hope the King is recovering at Carlsbad ?

I feel really very weak and ill. This gnawing pain and feeling of emptiness and the eternal longing for my lost happiness ; all these are undermining my life !

Today the beloved statue will be unveiled in the Horticultural Gardens in the presence of all our children, except Baby who is staying with me. Yesterday I went there quietly and alone, and I am very satisfied with it. Actually it is the memorial to the *great Exhibition of 1851*. Albert had seen the whole design himself and approved of it, only he wished to have my statue erected instead of his, and it was not until after the terrible tragedy on December 14th that it was decided to place his statue there. You will certainly want to see it when you are over here.

I must now close and hope to hear further details from you soon. Always your devoted sister and friend

V.R.

Windsor Castle.

July 3rd, 1863.

Dearest Augusta

I received your dear letter just before dinner for which accept my heartfelt thanks. Those lovely friendly days of your visit are over, like everything else in this world, but the memory of them remains, and your love, your kindness and your friendship to me are inestimable ! You have

\* The conflict in Prussia was at its height. An address of the House of Deputies on May 22nd to the King had demanded a change in the Ministry, which the King resolutely refused on May 26th. He described it as his duty to "preserve the Monarchical Power which concerned Law and Constitution from being curtailed".

comforted me and I shall miss you grievously. I have always loved, respected and admired you—as was the case with my dear Albert, because he was also your truest friend and admirer—and these feelings are still more acute through our having been together recently. To be able to talk so frankly with you, as I can with almost no one else, was a consolation to my poor, broken heart ! May God bless you, and when I go to join Him once more I beg you to keep your friendship for our poor children ! It cannot last much longer as my increasing weakness and shattered nerves are dragging me down. . . .

Osborne.

July 5th, 1863.

Dearest Augusta

I am writing this letter sitting here in the same old place as though nothing had ever changed. I want to write to you firstly to send you the Memorandum I promised you, and secondly to tell you once more how very beneficial your visit has been to me. It was most comforting to be able to speak to you so frankly about those many important matters and to receive so much good advice from you. And it is consoling to know that *you* at any rate understand how I am having to work and struggle and yet how weak and shaken I feel with my poor vitality wasting gradually away !

Lenchen wrote to you yesterday ; the arrival here was dreadful ! Everything, even to the day of arrival, was the same as before—it had been a paradise for me then (our life was so peaceful here and I saw much more of my Angel than I did elsewhere)—but now all is wrecked and finished, the whole place seems empty, desolate and joyless ! This contrast, this hopeless eternal longing were so overwhelming that I completely collapsed ! And yet I cannot believe it is all true ! I still think it must be some horrible dream. . . .

When Baron Stockmar died, the Queen once more gave way to her grief and in a letter which she wrote



to the Queen of Prussia, on July 14th, when she was at Osborne, she revealed the frightening degree of her obsession in a way she had never done before. The idea that she would soon die still beset the Queen and she wrote of the support which she expected the Queen of Prussia to give her children after her death. Then came the wretched phrases, "With every loss I grow poorer, my poor heart more broken, and must withdraw once more into its inmost recesses, where it languishes with grief. Oh, how bitter, how hot are the tears that I often pour forth in the evening in his room, kneeling beside his chair ! How fervently do I implore his aid, and how I wring my hands towards heaven and cry aloud : ' Oh God have pity, let me go soon ! Albert, Albert, where art thou ? ' "

## CHAPTER XII

1863-1865

IN the autumn of 1863, Queen Victoria made her first great effort, since Prince Albert's death, to act upon her own initiative and use her personal influence to encourage peace in Europe. Her opinions upon the several countries remained the same as those instilled into her by Prince Albert, but her will was her own. She was alarmed over the growing enmity and fear between Austria and Prussia. In August she set out for Thuringia, apparently to enjoy peace and the dangerous pleasure of memories, in the town and countryside which Prince Albert had known as a child. She still imagined that grief and despair were her only lot. She still wrote, "I think that my life will end more rapidly than any of you think", and she added a protest when a member of her Court gave a good account of her in a letter. "How could he?" Yet she was strong, in body as well as in will, and her journey to Coburg, professedly to rest, actually to mediate between Prussia and Austria, was one of the most impressive and picturesque incidents of her reign. While she was enjoying her quiet holiday at Rosenau, where Prince Albert was born, there was a Congress of reigning princes at Frankfurt. The King of Prussia had refused to attend the Congress and, in his place,

the Emperor of Austria presided over the conferences. "How beloved Albert, with his wise views and counsels, is missed at such a time", Queen Victoria wrote. She was nevertheless undaunted and she planned to speak to both the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria before she left again for England. These events were suggested in her letters to the Queen of Prussia, some time before the autumn holiday began. The proposed visit was clouded by Baron Stockmar's illness and death, in July.

Osborne.

July 8th, 1863.

Dearest Augusta

Yesterday I received your most kind and affectionate letter of Sunday evening, for which I thank you a thousand times. You are truly a great support to me, and how I need you now as I shall probably lose our wisest, our most faithful and our most intimate old friend! The news has grieved me deeply as one of my chief reasons for going to Coburg this year was to see him and talk to him again (as you know, we confided everything in each other). But now, if our dear Stockmar should no longer be alive, I have scarcely any desire to go there. However, it is almost my duty to go in order to meet the two young Princesses\* (if possible). . . .

Osborne.

July 12th, 1863.

Dearest Augusta,

A thousand thanks for your two loving letters and your expression of sympathy over the death of our best and oldest friend. He was so intimately connected with us, and particularly with my Angel, that I can face his

\* Princess Victoria and Princess Alice.

death—his leaving this world for ever—no more than I can my beloved Albert's ! Dear friend, my life becomes more desolate and more difficult as time goes on. My poor heart is shut up within itself, entirely against its nature and its need, and suffers secretly all the more !

Ah, this loss is irreparable ; it would be equally severe had I not suffered that other terrible tragedy as well, although I never felt lonely and desolate while my Angel was alive. But the house here has never been the same without Stockmar. Sir C. Phipps has just said so, too. We have lacked his unerring advice, his sure judgment and his general good qualities, and without doubt his departure increased all the responsibilities and torments which sapped my Angel's life.

If our loyal Stockmar had not ended his visit here, both he and my dear husband would still be alive ! I really believe that. Now these two beautiful souls, so closely bound to each other, are reunited once more for ever, and this is a consolation to me in my own deep grief. But my visit to Coburg will be ruined now. The son should carry on the relationship his father started and become a real family friend to us. He will visit us here some time soon. . . .

Queen Victoria undertook her task at the end of August, and on the last day the King of Prussia went to see her at Rosenau. Left alone with him, she might have appealed not vainly to his feelings and mind, but the King was already too strongly under the influence of Bismarck not to view the Queen's intervention with suspicion. The Queen wrote afterwards,

I . . . said that I must be allowed to make one observation, which was, how earnestly I hoped that Prussia and Austria would go together ; to which the King replied : " But how ? " It had been made quite impossible for him. He said that there was pre-determination on the part of

Austria to ruin Prussia, and she had contrived it, that the odium fell now upon him of having destroyed the unity of Germany.

In taking his leave of the Queen, the King of Prussia said, "I recommend my interest to your care", and the Queen answered, as recorded in her Journal, that he could rely on her "with certainty". The story of the Queen, facing two monarchs on their own territory, must always appeal to those who realise the heroic quality in her character. She was never afraid of either death or moral conflict, and if she deceived herself with perpetual grief, she did not deceive those who were near her. They realised now that she was grappling with a series of sensitive and important interviews, with patience, sense and courage. Three days after the King of Prussia had taken his leave, the Emperor Franz Joseph arrived in Coburg to see the Queen. "He was very civil", she commented afterwards. Again she wrote in her diary, with her customary diligence. She had told the Emperor that "the present moment" was one of great importance to Prussia and that she trusted that it would "lead to unity". "To which he replied that he hoped so too, but Prussia was a great difficulty".

The Queen returned to England. She was depressed at the result of the interviews and she complained that "no respect" was paid to her opinion. This was not true: although the forces involved were such that no individual could have changed them, the Queen had carried through her first, lonely mission with what her Minister described as "perfect judgment and tact".

When the Queen was back in England, she wrote to the King of Prussia, recalling their interview in Coburg. But a more personal alarm concerned her now. The marriage of her eldest daughter to the Crown Prince of Prussia naturally confused domestic and state issues and the Queen watched the career of her son-in-law with affection as well as interest. The Crown Prince, encouraged by his wife, was in revolt against Bismarck and the policy which he forced upon the King. An incident in July had brought this antagonism into the light. The Crown Prince had openly expressed his opinions against the Government, and although his father reprimanded him and then forgave him, the Prince continued to wish to shake himself free from Bismarck's policy, for the sake of his own conception of the welfare of the dynasty. The first letter which Queen Victoria wrote to the King of Prussia after their meeting in Coburg was upon this matter. She begged the King to permit his son to have the freedom he wished and to live apart from the shadow of Bismarck's control. She naturally thought of England as a home for the Prince until such time as he would be needed again in his own country.

Windsor Castle.

September 13th, 1863.

Dear Brother

During my short stay at Rosenau you were so friendly and outspoken towards me, and so gracious in granting my request that the children should come to Scotland for a short time (although it may turn out to be very difficult for them this year) that I feel no apology is needed if I write to you now about the following matter which we had no

time to discuss verbally. If my beloved Albert, whose opinion you always valued so highly, were still in this world I know He would have written to you about this which so closely concerns us ; however, since He cannot do so, I must write on his behalf as well. This matter, of course, concerns our beloved Fritz. He has demonstrated publicly that he is in opposition to your Government. Prussia's internal crisis still continues and I must confess that I dread its possible outcome. Should a serious discord arise between you and Fritz owing to a yet more intensive opposition, it might end perhaps with a deplorable *éclat* and would also menace our daughter's happiness. My apprehensive heart seeks for ways and means of averting such a disaster.

I do not want to discuss whether your son's opinions are right or wrong. But I can well imagine that the manner in which they were publicly announced must have been injurious to you. If Fritz has been very rash in this respect you might indulgently call to mind what daily experience teaches us, namely, that those very people who are used to repressing their own opinions in public often do not know the best way to act merely because of their inexperience. The deciding factor seems to me that your son believed it to be his duty to express that opinion, and that it cost him a hard battle to do so : moreover, he is not the only one to hold these particular views. I think, therefore, that his opinions and his expressions of them publicly despite his royal status should be regarded from a human standpoint and not as a crime ; indeed, I think his rights should be recognised all the more.

Actually, the fact that he *has* voiced this opinion may possibly prove advantageous to the Dynasty itself. Any human calculation can be wrong, and therefore it is just possible that you may not achieve the aims for which you are striving. In this case your son's opinions would give you ample facilities for adopting another course which could also benefit the Dynasty. Owing to these circumstances, I should deplore most deeply any attempt being

made to change Fritz's mind through hard and severe measures, such as exercising compulsion or restraint. If the attempt were successful Fritz would lose the world's respect, and if it did not succeed Fritz would react contrary to the desired effect and this would only aggravate the present situation. Fritz does not wish to become leader of the opposition, it is not in his nature to do so ; he is too good a son and has far too much respect for the Royal authority. He would only wish it to be possible for him to avoid further conflicts with you and your Government without renouncing his beliefs and losing his dignity as a man of honour. It is therefore a question of sparing him both possibilities. There is a simple way, and the only way so far as I can see, of avoiding greater discord and perhaps a serious *éclat*. Give him reasonable and necessary freedom ! Let him decide his own mode of living, let him choose his own residence ! This is the sincere request I want to make to you, the request of a friend who is apprehensive for your peace and for the welfare of her children. That Fritz would not misuse any freedom you grant him, his honourable and temperate character is sufficient guarantee. But in this way you would preserve the peace and dignity of your house and receive the grateful love of your children.

I am writing this letter entirely on my own impulse. The children have made not even the remotest suggestion and know nothing whatever about it. I know just as little about their wishes or plans and I shall certainly not try to influence them. My only thought is to make an effective appeal to you so as to avert still greater evil than already exists.

Begging your indulgence for the length of this letter, I remain your ever faithful but unhappy sister and friend

VICTORIA R.

The Queen apparently avoided these distressing affairs in her letters to Queen Augusta. The only letter preserved from this time shows a return to



melancholia. She wrote in the summer, when she was at Balmoral and surrounded by so many memorials to the dead Prince.

Balmoral.

September 26th, 1863.

Dear Augusta

I cannot describe how sad, desolate and melancholy I feel. My life is without joy, and nothing, nothing can ever bring back one shred of my lost happiness ! Oh God, why must it be so ? This yearning is such torture ! In this house I see him, hear him, search for him everywhere ! I go more out of doors ; I even take out my pony (the doctor is so insistent upon it) and ride a little in the beautiful mountains ; and when I am in the open and everything is as it used to be, I cannot believe that my beloved Albert is not out shooting as usual—then every evening comes the terrible return home, which is so agonising to me ! The house is empty, quiet, desolate ! Where is he ? I still listen in the hope that he may yet come in, his door may open and his angelic form will and must return, as so often before, from his shooting. I could go mad from the desire and longing !

But the wild, grim, solitary mountains, where no human soul is, comfort me ! The mountains, the woods, the rocks seem to talk of him, for he wandered and climbed so often among them.

God be with you ! Ever your loyal, unhappy Sister and Friend

V.R.

The Queen wrote to the King of Prussia again in December. Much had happened in the meantime and both the Crown Prince of Prussia and the Crown Princess had come to England, to stay with Queen Victoria. The King had at last allowed his son to withdraw from

the Ministerial sittings from which, he said, his conscience and his feeling commanded him to stay away. Queen Victoria was delighted. It must be observed, in passing, that her attitude towards the independent views of her son-in-law was not consistent with the strong control she still held over her own son, and it is disturbing to imagine the effect upon her if some other sovereign had written of her own duties as a mother, with equal force and frankness. Nevertheless, much of Queen Victoria's strength lay in her limitations as a logician and, for those who understand her character, it is not difficult to turn from the manner in which she governed her own heir, to the gratitude with which she received news of the King of Prussia's indulgence for his son's wishes.

Windsor Castle.

December 14th, 1863.

Dear, honoured Brother

I cannot allow our dear children to go without giving them these lines with my most cordial thanks for your two dear, kind letters which dear Fritz gave me.

Allow me to say how greatly relieved my mother's heart is, and how rejoiced I am at your decision to exempt Fritz in future from the ministerial sessions. I am convinced that you yourself will realise how much better it is that your dear, excellent son should not be compelled to take part in what his conscience and feelings bid him avoid. And you surely could not wish that he should act against his own firm conviction, a conviction which rests on the belief that he is acting only in your and the country's interests.

I will not attempt to go deeper into the serious question which is causing such universal anxiety ; I will only express the hope that in conjunction with yourself and with my other allies I may succeed in averting the great misfortune

of war, by finding the solution most satisfactory to all parties of this difficult question.\*

Please accept my warmest thanks for your kind contribution towards the colossal statue of my beloved Albert for Coburg ! I am nowadays so constantly overcome by the most painful and melancholy reflections that you, dear Brother, will forgive me if I now close my letter with the request that you will make my excuses to dear Augusta for not writing today. It is a consolation for us all that Vicky and Fritz were able to be with me today.† I am sure that you will find them looking well, also the two dear little grandchildren.

Ever your loyal sister and unhappy friend

V.R.

✓ We have seen that the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra had not been popular in Prussia. ✓ The close friendship between England and Denmark did not fit in with Bismarck's schemes and in 1864, when Denmark and Germany both claimed the Baltic states of Schleswig and Holstein, the relationship between the three courts of Prussia, England and Denmark was once more strained. When Prussian and Austrian soldiers invaded Schleswig-Holstein in January, there was a distinct division of feeling between sovereigns and princes in all three countries. Queen Victoria

\* The death of King Friedrich VII of Denmark threw the question of the succession to the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein into the immediate foreground. On November 16th, Christian IX was proclaimed King ; simultaneously the hereditary Prince Frederick of Augustenburg announced his accession to the throne of Schleswig-Holstein as Frederick VIII. When on November 18th Christian IX ratified the constitution which incorporated Schleswig in Denmark, the minor states of Germany pressed for an occupation of Holstein and for the establishment of the Prince of Augustenburg as the rightful ruler. In opposition to this, Bismarck, who already had an eye on the annexation of the Duchies for Prussia, enforced in conjunction with Austria an execution of the German Federation against the Duchies, by which the Prince of Augustenburg's claim was eliminated. Simultaneously Prussia armed herself for the possibility of war with Denmark as a result of the execution.

† Anniversary of the death of the Prince Consort.

still remembered Prince Albert's belief in the advantages of a strong Prussia and she gave her sympathy and support to the invasion. She wrote in this vein to the King. With similar enthusiasm, Princess Frederick declared herself in favour of the country of her adoption. She had written, in June of the previous year, "Thank God I was born in England". But her view changed when the Prussian soldiers invaded the northern states and she resented the criticisms in the British Parliament. "I would almost quarrel with my real and best friends in dear England rather than forget that I belong to this country, the interest of which I have so *deeply* at heart" she wrote. In this letter, which was written to her mother, she declared the criticisms in British newspapers to be "absurd, unjust and rude". She could see nothing "inhuman or improper" in the bombardment of Sonderburg and she resented the "continued meddling and interfering of England in other people's affairs". In England, Queen Victoria and her Ministers were divided in their views of Prussia's advance into the Baltic states. Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell were so alarmed by the progress of Prussia, and the possibility that the Austrian fleet might sail up past the English coast to capture Copenhagen that they summoned the British fleet to English waters, to be at hand. Queen Victoria remained calm and she warned her Ministers that there were to be "no threats" and "no more orders" without consulting her. She was pleased, some years afterwards, when Lord Halifax talked of these times and of the good she had done in "checking" the "reckless course" of Lord Russell and Lord Palmerston.

The saddest figure in the story was that of Princess Alexandra. She had to take her place in England as the wife of the Prince of Wales and yet realise that her country was being threatened with the approval of her mother-in-law. The Queen was told that the Princess did not sleep at night because of her anxiety. The most alarming complication which ensued, as far as personal relationships were concerned, was in the division of opinion between the Queen and her son. The sympathies of the Prince of Wales went to the little country which was the home of his wife and he did not hesitate to express his feelings, much to the alarm of the Queen. She did not remonstrate herself, but chose the official way—she asked Lord Clarendon to speak to her son and remind him that he was “bound by so many ties of blood to Germany” and “only quite lately, by marriage, to Denmark”. The incident marked a significant moment in history. From this time, the Prince of Wales became more and more anti-Prussian. Neither his mother’s prejudices nor the advice of Ministers changed the way of his sympathies, which ultimately rested upon France.

Few incidents in Queen Victoria’s reign reveal her greatness more than the calm way in which she intervened between the opposed countries. She established herself as a matriarch among the sovereigns of Europe when she argued in the cause of patience and peace. When the first violence of the invasion had passed and when an armistice was declared, it was Queen Victoria who urged that the negotiations should not be hurried. “By giving time”, she said, “the passions on all sides will be calmed and cooled down”.

This thought of being the calm mediator prompted the Queen to write to the King of Prussia twice during the month of May, when peace was in view.

Windsor Castle.

May 11th, 1864.

Dear Brother

First and foremost I am eager to thank you most sincerely for your dear letter and also for investing Alfred with your Order.\*

My pleasure in this matter is only clouded by the fact that this great token of your kindness and affection will not be so honoured and appreciated at the present moment by a certain class of my people as I could wish. The cause of this misunderstanding arises solely from the present mood of irritation with Germany, and, alas, especially with Prussia, which is purposely encouraged by a certain powerful party who assert that Prussia's activity in the whole Schleswig-Holstein question was directed solely towards increasing Prussian power and Prussian territory !

The more I deplore this sordid anti-German party intrigue, the more strongly and sincerely do I desire that from the Prussian side the occasion should be seized of making a more favourable impression on public opinion here, namely, that the representative at the Conference† should act frankly and moderately, and so cut the ground from under these now prevailing suspicions.

With regard to the latest event, the Armistice,‡ I can in the interest of humanity sincerely congratulate both you and your victorious army, and, indeed, the whole of Europe.

\* Order of the Black Eagle.

† In January, Austria and Prussia marched their troops into Denmark, after their proposal to occupy Schleswig provisionally had been refused by the German Federation. The war of Austria and Prussia against Denmark began. The conference held in London of representatives of Austria, Prussia, the German Federation, Denmark, England, France, Russia and Sweden collapsed without result owing to Denmark's obstinacy.

‡ The armistice proposed by the neutral countries began on May 12th, and was at first to last 4 weeks, but was then continued until June 26th.

We will hope to God that this first goal having been attained in the face of the enormous difficulties, the Conference will now continue and prosper and at last achieve a just and lasting peace ! In so far as my own will and actions are concerned, you may be sure of my best support !

Alas, how I miss my beloved Angel Albert, now and always !

Ever your loyal unhappy sister and friend

V.R.

Balmoral.

May 28th, 1864.

Dear Brother

Although I wrote to you only a short while ago, yet our present relations provoke me once more to address a few lines to you.

You know that I have done my utmost from the beginning to prevent this unhappy war, and that the bitterness which has arisen between our two countries pains me exceedingly. I and my Cabinet sincerely desire to see this miserable quarrel ended ; for that reason we proposed a conference which, though at variance with the principles of the Treaty of 1852, seemed to afford the only possibility of a lasting settlement.

I should be deeply sorry if the prospect of peace were to be darkened by Prussia's demands. Your arms having been so victorious, it now rests upon the use which Prussia makes of her triumph whether public sympathy is influenced away from the weaker party and in her favour. Your Government has repeatedly declared that it is not guided by any selfish or ambitious motive, and this I myself—though, alas, not my people—have always believed.

If Prussia now moderates her demands as much as possible, there will be a reaction of public feeling in her favour, not only in England but also in the other disinterested countries. Therefore I beseech you most earnestly, in the interests of the world and of peace, to put forward demands

which Denmark can agree to. If your Government obstinately refuses to accept the frontier line which they propose, or puts forward inadmissible demands with regard to confederation fortresses or fortified harbours, it will not only probably make peace impossible but also confirm the prevailing opinion that Prussia started this war on a false pretext, with ambitious intentions of her own, and I tremble for the consequences of such an impression !

You will, I am sure, forgive me, dear Brother, for the great candour with which I have expressed myself, but my beloved Albert used to do the same, and the danger is too great to dispense with any means of establishing peace ! God be with you, dear Friend.

Ever your loyal, unhappy Sister and Friend

V.R.\*

Prince William came to England to stay with his grandmother in July. He was already well known in England, and when he appeared in St. George's Chapel for the wedding of the Prince of Wales, in 1863, he had attracted attention. The visit in the summer of 1864 was spent at Osborne, and Queen Victoria wrote immediately to Queen Augusta when he arrived.

Osborne.

July 12th, 1864.

Dear Augusta

Little William is due to arrive at four o'clock today. I am pleased that you have no objection to this little child travelling to see his grandmother.

July 13th. Dear little William arrived yesterday at 4.30

\* King William answered on June 4th that it was not possible to agree to the proposals of the Conference, that Prussia was unjustly accused of pursuing a self-seeking policy in this war, that such slanderous accusations could not deter him from renewing the war. The King ended with an entreaty to the Queen to influence her government to make a fair and just decision between war and peace.



safe and sound and quite happy! and feeling "quite at home"; he is a dear, sweet child, so "affectionate" towards me, and remembering his beloved grandfather and even Osborne, which is a great deal! And yet I myself feel terribly sad. It reminds me so vividly of 1861, when we all spent such happy days here in July and August! Now everything is as it was then—and everything in ruins!!!

The sensational news that the Danes have at last proposed an armistice with the intention of starting peace negotiations reached us last night and was a most joyful surprise. God grant that there may now be a speedy, peaceful and satisfactory solution of this exceedingly vexatious question, which has for years threatened the peace of all Europe!\*

The year closed with a depressed letter, written from Windsor Castle where the Queen so easily turned to her grief and to memories of her early happiness.

Windsor Castle.

November 8th, 1864.

Dearest Augusta

My sojourn here during this winter season, where everything reminds me of last year and of my Angel's last weeks, is truly melancholy and painful, and yet I love being here and re-living everything in my thoughts! But alas, how desolate it all is, how hard my life will be without joy! Time only makes things emptier and more lonely, and my outbursts of passionate grief are always comforting.

Tomorrow is another bitter day: Bertie's birthday! Since 1861 he has no longer kept it here, and before that always with jollifications! My Angel was always so good and affectionate to his children, and always wanted them to be gay and happy. On the last occasion I was very sad, and had ordered music to be played at dinner for the first time

\* Peace was signed in Vienna on October 30th. Denmark yielded the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg to Austria and Prussia.

since the loss of dear Mama, and my beloved Albert ordered Bertie to take my arm ! Tomorrow everything will be quiet ! Alas, everything is quiet, and my heart is cold and empty !

The Empress Eugénie is very sympathetic, and I know that she feels and understands my grief ; for she had a great admiration for my Angel, and the dear, good Albert liked her also. Merciful Heaven, my loss, my unhappiness is unspeakable ! The two creatures who loved me most and to whom I was dearest on earth are gone : my dear mother and my adored Angelic Husband, and I feel and miss them so terribly. There is no one left to hold me in their arms and press me to their heart ! Patience—one day I shall be with him again and this suffering will be forgotten !

Goodbye, dear Friend ! Think with affection on your poor, unhappy, prostrated Sister and Friend

V.R.

I was truly sorry to say goodbye to my dear, lonely beautiful mountains.

Balmoral.

May 31st, 1865.

Dear Augusta,

Accept my profoundest thanks for your two dear letters of the 14th and 21st—also for the pretty present for my unhappy old birthday—a day which I would gladly see pass without remark. But that cannot be, and I must endure as long as God wills it ! A thousand thanks for all your dear, lovely expressions and good wishes ! My only desire is to continue as He, my beloved Angel, would have wished—and yet I know and feel how many things and how many relationships have altered, and that I must find help and consolation where I can. And yet I would almost rather sit and weep and live only with Him in spirit and take no interest in the things of this earth, for I believe that I am going further away from him and do not always see

things so clearly as I used to ! But I suppose that is God's will and one must acquiesce in that also. He commands that I shall live, and so He allows me for the present the power to continue, until I am with my Angel once more.

My political and queenly tasks are the hardest for me. Only a sense of duty and the knowledge that my Angel wishes it and that I must answer to him force me to carry them out. More than ever do I long to lead a private life tending the poor and sick : I only do wearisome things with the thought that it is good in his eyes, and when I know and feel that I can promote good, maintain order, prevent evil and advance the general welfare ; then I am prepared to continue so long as my weak and shattered nerves endure. . . .

## CHAPTER XIII

1865-1867

IN the middle of October, Queen Victoria was able to announce the betrothal of still another daughter. Queen Augusta had been seeking among the smaller courts of Germany for a suitable husband for Princess Helena, Queen Victoria's third daughter, and a letter written in October shows that suggestions had already been made. The choice fell on Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, who afterwards made his home in England. The marriage was very happy and Queen Victoria's hopes, expressed in her letter, were not in vain.

From this theme she moved to the last illness of Lord Palmerston, who died before the month ended. A little gentleness came into the Queen's letters written after Palmerston's death. She turned from her usual reproaches and she remembered, with feeling, that his cynical, ungracious figure was a link with the old days. But she did not forget her old resentment entirely. She wrote to King Leopold, "It is very *striking*, and is another link with the past—the happy past—which is gone, and in many ways he is a great loss. He had many valuable qualities, though many bad ones. . . . But I *never* liked him, or could ever the least respect him, nor could I forget his conduct on certain occasions to my Angel. He was very

vindictive, and *personal* feelings influenced his political acts very much. Still, he is a great loss ! ”

There was no letter to Queen Augusta describing the Queen's feelings after Palmerston's death ; only the earlier reference to “ Poor Lord Palmerston ” being “ very ill ”.

Balmoral.

October 17th, 1865.

Dearest Augusta,

Receive my most heartfelt thanks for your dear, warm-hearted letter of the 5th, which I received last week. How glad I am to hear that you are pleased with my present. It is really a great success.

I must now speak to you about a matter which I could not mention before, as I did not want to cherish false hopes again, which would again have to be disappointed. You will certainly be glad, for you took so much trouble at the time to find out about P. von O, that I have the reassuring prospect of having found for our good, self-sacrificing Lenchen a husband who, by virtue of his character, is able to be a support to her, will make her happy, and is prepared to settle in England. This last point has become unavoidably necessary owing to my sad position, if I am to get through my heavy tasks at all. In Prince Christian of Holstein-Augustenburg we believe we have found the right husband. He has made the most favourable impression upon Lenchen, and so has she upon him. Since then he has expressed (through his brother) his lively desire to get to know Lenchen better, in the hope of winning her love, and I have invited him to Osborne for the end of December. Though naturally no engagement has taken place, and cannot take place till they know each other better, yet I may regard the matter as pretty well settled, and that sets my mind at rest. You have known Prince Christian for a long time, so that, as I hear, you have a good opinion of him. I feel certain that

in the circumstances my beloved Albert would approve of this choice, and that his blessing would rest upon this union. I may confidently count upon your kindness and friendship in this matter, may I not?

You know that we have never chosen our children's marriages out of political considerations ; Bertie's is, indeed, an example of this.—*Of course to his wife and family this alliance cannot be popular but that cannot be helped and is of no consequence.* By a certain party in Germany it will not be welcomed either.

I am extremely sorry about the death of your faithful groom of the chambers, or rather, majordomo. Such losses are most painful and really irreplaceable. I will see to it that his successor manages to see all that you wish.

Poor old Lord Palmerston is very ill, though he is better since yesterday. One cannot count upon any real recovery, even though the momentary danger is past.

The weather was wonderful up to the 9th and almost without a drop of rain ! Since then it has rained for several days, and unfortunately very violently on the 9th, just as we were driving and riding over to Dunleith on a visit to the dear, excellent Duchess of Atholl. . . .

Your faithful unhappy sister and friend,

V.R.

In the autumn of 1865, Queen Victoria wrote to King Leopold, "I sometimes wish I could throw everything up and retire into private life". The wish was no doubt genuine, but the events of the early months of 1866 showed that the Queen's will was as strong as ever and that if she pined for retirement she was also able to rise in strength and indignation when she became shocked by the ambitions of Bismarck. In March the Crown Princess of Prussia wrote to her mother about the "wicked man" and his power over the King. That Great Britain had been equally

pleased in building up a great empire did not deter Queen Victoria from remonstrating over Bismarck's ambitions, and when it was apparent that he was willing to go to war with Austria to realise those aims, she wrote in sorrow and indignation to the King, and on the same day to Queen Augusta. The feeling in England against Prussia was such that she asked her friend to postpone a proposed visit to Windsor.

Windsor Castle.

March 28th, 1866.

Dearest Augusta,

I now come to a subject which I am reluctant to talk about, but which duty forbids me to conceal from you. It is that I fear that your dear visit in April will be quite impossible, for the following reasons. The first is the mood of extreme irritation against Prussia which prevails at the present critical time, and which would make your and my position extremely painful ; and the second is the probability of a political, or rather ministerial crisis at that very time which will agitate me to such an extent and take up so much of my time, now that I am deprived of the help of my beloved husband, that it would be utterly impossible to have you or anyone else staying in the house. But I do not want to forego the joy of seeing you for a few days this year, and therefore I suggest that you should either visit me at Osborne at the beginning of August, or come here sometime in November or at the beginning of December. It is only in the last week that the situation has become such as to oblige me to give you this painful, but quite genuine piece of news. . . .

Faced with Bismarck's policy being put into action, Queen Victoria forgot many of the views which she had expressed in the past. Prince Albert had said in 1847, " My own view is that the political reformation of Germany lies entirely in the hands of Prussia ".

The Queen had repeated his view in a letter to Lord Stanley, when she wrote, "A strong, united, liberal Germany would be a most useful ally to England". Now that Bismarck was forcing these ideas into the field of action, the Queen was not equally sympathetic. She wrote once more to the King of Prussia on April 10th, begging him to guard himself against Bismarck's ambitions. "You are deceived", she wrote, and she entreated him to refuse to entertain the frightful thought of war with Austria. She wrote of Bismarck as the "one man alone" who was to blame for the mischief. Her remonstrances did not deter Bismarck and "the thundering machine of Prussia" went on. Bismarck was aiming at a country which was one nation and not thirty-six little states. In June, action began. The Prussians drove the Austrians out of Holstein and then they turned to Hanover. The blind King was forced out of his country and became an exile in Paris. Victory followed victory, and on July 3rd the Austrians were defeated at Königgrätz, in Bohemia. Bismarck's needle-gun, the forerunner of more terrible machines of war, was too much for the Austrian muzzle-loaders.

There was a gap in the correspondence between Queen Victoria and Queen Augusta during these months save for one letter, on June 27th, when Sigismund, the two-year-old son of the Crown Prince and Princess, died at Potsdam. Then Queen Victoria wrote to her friend.

Frogmore.

June 27th, 1866.

Dear Augusta,

Please accept my warmest thanks for your two dear,



sympathetic letters of the 21st and 23rd ! Alas, God has sorely tried our poor children, and my heart bleeds for them ! If I could only hold Vicky in my arms and comfort her and teach her resignation ! But she seems to me to be bearing her great and heavy sorrow in the only way possible. "Thy will be done !" "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord !"

I must also thank you most deeply for your motherly affection to our poor Vicky ; it has been a deep source of comfort to her ! Also a thousand thanks for your last dear letter from Baden. How well I understand your worry and anxiety ! But I do not want to write about this terrible, unforgivable war, for I could not say things which would be bound to hurt you, and that I would not do at any price to my dear, true friend ; so I prefer to remain silent ! I admire your self-sacrifice in going yourself to take the sad news to our dear Fritz.\* It was an act worthy of you. . . .

From June to August there were no letters. When peace came to a fattened Prussia and a humiliated Austria, Queen Victoria took up her pen once more. She had failed to prevent war, but now she hoped to take some hand in lessening the demands of peace. Her first plea was to Queen Augusta.

Osborne.

August 8th, 1866.

Dear Augusta,

You will, I know, have understood my silence, and not have doubted my friendship or my sympathy in your many troubles ! But now that, D.V., there is no more doubt about peace, I would like to say how thankful I am to God

\* Queen Augusta went on the 19th to visit her son at Headquarters in Neisse ; the Crown Prince had already received news of the death of his son on the 18th.

that he has spared our dear ones, and also, how proud I am of our dear beloved Fritz.\* Everywhere I hear nothing but praise of him ! How this would have rejoiced my Angelic Albert ! But what dreadfully heavy sacrifices have been made, what terrible unhappiness of every kind this war has caused !

Fritz and Vicky appear still very prostrated over the loss of the poor little child !

I do not wish to pass any opinion on the present terribly complicated state of affairs ; I will only say one thing, and that is a thing which my beloved Albert used always to say and which you once wrote in an album of Fritz's " May Prussia become merged in Germany, not Germany in Prussia ! " Now is the moment once more to create a great, united Germany with Prussia at her head ! But will your people in Germany appreciate the situation ?

There was one astonishing outcome of Queen Victoria's entreaty that the peace terms should not be too exacting for Austria, for Hanover, and for the other States humiliated in the war. Her daughter, the Crown Princess, ignored her mother's plea. She had thanked God that she was English not so very long before. Now she wrote, in defence of Prussia's victories : " I cannot, and will not, forget that I am a Prussian . . . the victor *must* make his own terms and they *must* be hard ones for the enemy. . . . We have made *enormous* sacrifices, and the nation expects them not to be in vain. I fear this is all the answer I can give you at present ".

There are no letters in existence to show that the Queen wrote to Queen Augusta during 1867, and there is only one letter, among the unpublished

\* Crown Prince Frederick William had commanded the 2nd Army in the Bohemian campaign and had taken a decisive part in the victory of Königgrätz.

correspondence, from the Queen to the King of Prussia. This was also "in the interests of peace" and was written in April of that year.

Windsor Castle.

April 22nd, 1867.

Dear Brother,

I feel compelled to write you a few lines in the interests of peace, which I am sure lie as close to your heart as they do to mine. The peace of Europe seems to be seriously threatened,\* and it would surely be painful to you (it certainly would be to me) to realise that the world might with justice ascribe the guilt to Prussia.

This may indeed, easily be the case, if the Emperor's conciliatory advances do not meet with an equally conciliatory response from the side of Prussia. The Emperor is willing to relinquish all his demands in regard to Luxembourg, and expresses his readiness to fall in with any arrangement about the fortress provided that there is a guarantee that it does not constitute a menace to either France or Germany. In return for this the Emperor demands only that the Prussian garrison should be withdrawn; and when one thinks how greatly the pride of the French government and of the French people must be injured by the renunciation of those demands uttered with such imperious ostentation, their present request appears a very small thing to concede, in the interests of peace.

If this request is denied, then the world will appear only too well justified in accusing Prussia of desiring the war, and you must not be surprised if the responsibility for all the misery which this war will bring in its train be laid at the door of Prussia.

\* Napoleon III wanted to buy Luxembourg from Holland; it did not belong to the North German Confederation, but its fortress was garrisoned by German troops. The state of tension arising from this situation was relieved by the Treaty of London on May 11th, by which Luxembourg was declared neutral, and the property of the Dutch King, the fortress evacuated by the Prussians and demolished.

64      FURTHER LETTERS OF QUEEN VICTORIA

I have not the smallest doubt that the Emperor is very anxious that peace shall be maintained. Now it rests entirely with Prussia, whether peace is maintained or not, and I beseech you, for God's sake, reflect before casting away this opportunity which is now offered you !

I remain, dear Brother, your loyal Sister

V.R.

## CHAPTER XIV

1868-1869

A NEW and happy period of the Queen's life began in 1868, when Mr. Disraeli came into power. From the time when Lord Derby retired, in February, one traces the effect of Disraeli's influence over the Queen, especially in the more lively tone of her letters. His first letter revealed his genius in dealing with his sovereign. He wrote, "Your Majesty's life has been passed in constant communication with great men. . . . This rare and choice experience must give your Majesty an advantage in judgment which *few* living persons and probably no living Princes can rival". In one line he wrote that he could "offer only devotion". Disraeli kept his promise and the usual cold relationship between sovereign and ministers, to which the Queen was accustomed, gave place to a gentle and trusting friendship. Queen Victoria communicated her happiness and her admiration to the Queen of Prussia.

Osborne.

February 26th, 1868.

Dear Augusta,

Mr. Disraeli has achieved his present high position entirely by his ability, his *wonderful, happy disposition* and the astounding way in which he carried through the Reform

Bill, and I have nothing but praise for him. One thing which has for some time *predisposed* me in his favour is his great admiration for my beloved Albert and his recognition of and respect for his great character. . . .

When the Prince Consort died, in 1861, the Queen had written that his memorials should be "numberless". No tribute to his virtues meant more to her than the writing of his biography by Theodore Martin, and she was pleased when the first volume was completed early in 1868. One of the first to receive a copy was Queen Augusta.

Windsor Castle.

March 10th, 1868.

Dear Augusta,

Today I am sending you a book which I am sure, dear Friend, will interest you exceedingly. It is none other than the first volume of the Life of my beloved Albert, which I have had written and published for our children, our descendants and our friends. It only goes down to 1841, and we are now busy on the continuation. This book will be the basis for a public, though of course less detailed, Life, which will appear at a later date. Please accept it as a present !

There were no more letters for some months and the only important one was written to the King of Prussia in December. The Crown Prince and Crown Princess had been to England. The little wound over the Prussian victory had healed and Queen Victoria was very happy to have her daughter with her, after a long absence. One traces the theme of talks between mother and daughter in the letter which Queen Victoria

wrote to the King after the Princess had returned to Prussia.

Osborne.

December 27th, 1868.

Dear Brother,

I cannot possibly allow our children to return without sending by them a few lines of thanks for your permission to keep them here over Christmas. It was a source of the greatest pleasure to us all; for me, alas! this happy festival is always mingled with deep melancholy, since the dear Head of the house, who would have been so happy to have his dear children and grandchildren round him, is gone for ever.

I thank you heartily for your letter with its confidences, and will answer it with equal frankness. As regards this prolonged absence of our dear children, I have merely to observe that this has very seldom been the case, and that they have not been here for the last 3 years.

But indeed, I have no doubt that you will allow me to see our dear daughter more often, if only for a comparatively short time; for you, dear brother, see your own daughter not only every year, but several times every year, and she can come to you at any time. Your loving paternal heart will surely understand that I should not like to be parted from Vicky again for three whole years. She will, of course, do her best to comply with your wishes as regards social life, only you and dear Augusta will certainly show consideration for her, for she does not really stand very hot rooms and late hours well.

As for her drives, I am really not in a position to say anything, for I leave it to our daughter-in-law to follow her own wishes entirely in this respect, and in any case, in our day, driving with four horses has quite gone out of fashion almost everywhere.

Forgive me, dear brother, for expressing myself so frankly to you, but I think you will prefer it so.

I am really sorry to see our dear children and grandsons go away ; I hope they will have a good journey.

With best and most heartfelt wishes for the New Year, I remain ever

Your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

In February of 1869 Queen Victoria reopened the vexing question of Prussia's hard bargain with Hanover.

Osborne.

February 10th, 1869.

Dear Brother,

Accustomed as I am always to write frankly to you, and knowing that I can count on your friendship, goodness of heart and love of justice, I feel compelled to do so now, and to tell you with what painful suspense I have followed the debate in the Prussian Chamber on the question of the confiscation of the Hanoverian crown property. I am not questioning the right of the Prussian Government to withhold from King George any revenues which he might claim from Prussia, but to deprive the Agnates, who have taken no part in the latest political developments and are in no way responsible for the behaviour of King George V, of their indisputable rights would be such a misuse of power and such a travesty of justice and morality, that I cannot refrain from appealing on behalf of those Agnates, my near relatives, to your sense of chivalry, and from begging you not to ratify with your signature your Chamber's unjust resolution.

I hope that this time I am not appealing to you in vain, dear Brother, and that your ministers will give the Agnates a promise that their rights shall be respected, and that their fortune shall be managed in such a way as to maintain the capital intact.

I can hardly describe to you what a disagreeable impression the Prussian Chamber's measures have created



among all parties here; I am also certain that you will admit that the greater the success and power of a state, the more it is in a position to deal generously with its conquered foes, by which generosity it can only rise higher in the general esteem.

I remain, dear Brother, ever your loyal Sister and Friend  
V. R.

The Queen was apparently consoled by the King's reply, sent to her three days afterwards, and she expressed her gratitude in a letter written almost immediately.

Osborne.

February 17th, 1869.

Dear Brother,

I received your dear letter of the 13th with great joy and satisfaction, for it reassured me in the belief which I have always held that you were incapable of such an action. Your statement that the interests of the Agnates will be in no way prejudiced and that their rights will be legally upheld by the Chambers is of the greatest value, and settles the question once and for all so far as they are concerned.

Hoping that you are in good health, and once more thanking you for your dear letter, I remain, dear Brother, your loyal Sister and Friend

V. R.

## CHAPTER XV

1870-1871

THE year 1870 brought Franco-Prussian animosity to a head, and witnessed the downfall of Louis Napoleon. The war between the two countries was, in its swiftness, its ferocity, and the triviality of its pretext, almost without parallel. A distant relative of the King of Prussia, Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, had appeared as a candidate to the vacant throne of Spain, and France objected to the possibility of German influence on the other side of the Pyrenees. The candidature was consequently withdrawn, and thus the matter might have ended if the French had not demanded a promise that it would never be renewed. The terms of this promise amounted almost to an apology, and it was refused. There is no doubt that the French attitude was overbearing, while Bismarck was far from being reluctant to allow France to provoke a war. In such an atmosphere, tempers were easily roused. Without troubling to send an ultimatum, France declared war, confident in the certainty of victory. Prussia, as the victim of an unjustifiable attack, had the support of world opinion and the enthusiasm of the people. In his folly Napoleon had unified Germany as no one else could have done. Before the end of the war King William of Prussia had become the first German Emperor.

Queen Victoria's sympathies were with Prussia. The instability and shifty ambitions of Napoleon had

long since destroyed the English alliance of Crimean days. It is beyond the scope of this book to consider to what extent Bismarck facilitated the outbreak of war ; it is enough to say that Queen Victoria and the Prussian Royal family did all they could to preserve peace, and were justly amazed at the reckless aggression of the French. In her private correspondence Queen Victoria gave full expression to her sympathy with Prussia, but in her official capacity she was scrupulously careful to honour the neutrality which was England's proper course.

The progress of the war was sensational. Mobilising rapidly, the Prussians inflicted a series of defeats and quickly gained the upper hand. Queen Victoria's son-in-law, the Crown Prince of Prussia, had command of an army and he distinguished himself by winning several important victories.

Osborne.

July 20th, 1870.

Dearest Friend,

What can I say ? This dreadful war is vile and unforgivable ! May God protect our dear, beloved Germany ! My heart is indeed heavy and bleeds for you ! We have made every possible effort to preserve peace ! Warmest thanks for your dear letter of the 15th. How terrible all this is for Leopold and Antoinette and for the Duke himself ! Please send me news constantly ! My task is very difficult. I shall have to endure a great deal. I hope the King's health will not suffer and that he will not overstrain himself ! God preserve our dear excellent Fritz ! Poor Vicky and Alice, how my heart bleeds for them !

God be with you, dear Augusta.

Always your devoted, unhappy sister and friend

V. R.

Osborne,

July 22nd, 1870.

Dear Brother

As an old friend I cannot see you go to war without crying "God save you and bless you" from my whole heart! My heart is indeed heavy. May God protect all those dear to us and especially our dear Fritz! More I am unable to say, but my task is a heavy one. Ever your devoted sister

V.

Osborne.

July 27th, 1870.

Dear Augusta,

I received safely your dear letter of the 23rd with the enclosures and thank you heartily for it. It touched me deeply. The feeling in the country here is very sound and the English cannot endure injustice and dishonourableness. Only our position is very difficult and needs the greatest prudence. You [both] have my prayers by day and night. How frightfully moving your departure from Coblenz must have been, and indeed the whole journey. The proclamation is very fine and the letter most interesting. God be praised that my dear sister is safe in Switzerland.

Farewell for today, dearest! God be with you! May he grant his particular protection and care to our dear Fritz, whose command is such a hard and important one!

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

Where is your brother? The great heat, which still continues, is trying me severely.

Osborne.

August 10th, 1870.

Dearest Augusta,

I need not tell you how my heart beat when I heard the news of our beloved Fritz's sudden and glorious victories,\* how I thanked God for preserving him, how I think of him

\* On August 4th near Weissenburg and on the 6th near Woerth.

constantly, and of you, how I pray for him ! What incredible things have happened ! But one lives in terrible fear, and today we are hourly awaiting news of another battle, and I feel very agitated and upset ! Telegrams arrive the whole time, and we get no peace. But then, how must you be feeling, and our dear Vicky, and all those thousands of poor women, mothers and daughters, etc. ! And these heavy losses, how shocking they are ! We still have no news at all except from telegrams, and you can imagine our agitation ! I have written to Fritz and also to the King and am sending you a copy of my letter.

People (in Germany) are really very unjust towards us, for the feeling in this country is pro-German, and they are also very unfair to the good Lord Granville, for he has been particularly cautious and unbiased, much more than Lord Clarendon would have been !

Please let me have all possible details !

Today Parliament adjourns and on the 16th we leave for Scotland, arriving, D.V., on the 18th.

Ever your most devoted friend and sister

V. R.

Please telegraph me when you receive this letter. I trust the King is well ? Which Princes are with him ? How beautiful Freiligrath's poem\* in the Volkszeitung is !

Prussian successes continued, but the losses on both sides were enormous. Appalled by this slaughter for the sake of what King Leopold aptly described as "*une nuance aussi puérile*", Queen Victoria voiced a horror of war and a foreboding of its consequences which is echoed by every statesman and newspaper today with apparently as little prospect of its abolition.

At Sedan the French were compelled to make one of the most disastrous surrenders of all time. Over a

\* " Hurra Germania ! "

hundred thousand men laid down their arms, and the Prussians learned with astonishment that Napoleon himself was among the prisoners. Negotiations for peace were begun, but the French deposed Napoleon, who had been sent into exile by the Prussians, and endeavoured to fight on.

Windsor Castle.

August 17th, 1870.

Dear Augusta,

On the day of our departure for the north I am writing to thank you warmly for your dear letter of the 13th, received yesterday with the interesting enclosures. My thoughts are constantly occupied with this terribly bloody war, though victorious for you. This frightful bloodshed is really too horrible in Europe in the 19th century. With the weapons of today it is really too ghastly, and when this war is at an end, there ought to be some attempt made to find means of preventing such wars once and for all. Otherwise the peoples will become extinct! I hope that your health will not suffer from this excitement and suspense and the unhealthy air of Berlin. Would not Babelsberg be quieter and better for you?

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

Balmoral.

August 29th, 1870.

Dearest Augusta

I once more send you my heartiest congratulations on the King's great, decisive, glorious, but, alas, bloody victory of the 18th.\* How your heart must have beat when you heard that the King was exposed to danger and what a

\* At Gravelotte St. Privat.

great part he played in the victory ! Please tell him how much I thought of him, how pleased I was and how I thanked God for his preservation ! How rarely nowadays, as you so rightly say, is it given to anyone, much less to a king, to lead his troops—and such troops as these !—to victory !

God will continue to protect you, but, I must confess, the strain is terrible ! I am perpetually on edge, and my worry is increased by the entire (and very necessary) ignorance of events in which we are kept, and by the false rumours which keep coming to us from France.

I can well imagine your, Vicky's and Alice's state of mind, and the anxiety felt by all the women of Germany, mothers, daughters and sisters ! In this country we do everything we can for the wounded ; they are in a terrible state, and their sufferings appalling ! Day and night we are haunted by dire thoughts of all our dear ones ! We are all hard at work for the poor wounded. When will there be peace ; when will this terrible bloodshed end ?

You will be very pleased to hear that Leopold\* is greatly improved. Good-bye, dear friend ! I thank you from my heart for your last dear letter of the 20th, and pray fervently for you.

Ever your devoted friend and sister

V. R.

Balmoral.

September 6th, 1870.

Dear Augusta

It is quite impossible for me not to write today. What incredible things have happened ! And yet I always thought that something of the kind would come to pass ! It would have been better for the unfortunate Emperor to have died on the field of battle, but he was too ill for that.

I must tell you that, having known the Empress so well and being unable to look on unmoved at the misfortunes of others, particularly those who, like the Emperor and

\* The Queen's fourth son, who suffered from hæmophilia.

Empress, have always received so much adulation, I sent her the following message : " that I could not be unmoved by their dreadful misfortune, and that I was mindful of past days ". I want you to know this, lest any mischievous use should be made of it. You are yourself so generous, dear Friend, that you surely will not misunderstand me, and will also explain it to the King.

Whether the Emperor has been deceived, or whether it is mostly his own fault, I should be very glad to know. I beseech you to give me details of why the Emperor surrendered, about MacMahon's army and about the interview.\* How incredibly strong and well, *unberufen*, the dear King must be to bear all this ! Everyone here is amazed at it. I feel rather exhausted by all this strain and worry, which I have to endure all alone ! How are you, dear Augusta ? My thoughts are so much with you ! God be with you ! Ever your devoted sister and friend

V. R.

What do you intend to do with all those prisoners ? † There has never been anything like it before. I so often think of 1848, and then again of 1855.

In October, Queen Victoria put aside the subject of the war to send news of the engagement of her daughter, Princess Louise, to the son of the Duke of Argyll. She had realised that the political importance of royal marriages was rapidly decreasing, and the result of a foreign marriage was too often the misery of divided loyalties. Queen Victoria had already seen this happen during the Prusso-Danish conflict, when the Prince of Wales shared the sympathies of his Danish wife, while the Princess Royal naturally sided

\* King William's interview with Napoleon in the Bellevue Castle.

† After the capitulation of Sedan, MacMahon's army of 108,000 men, amongst them 2,866 officers, became prisoners of war ; the officers were given their freedom on parole that they would not fight any more.



with Prussia. The Queen never underestimated the authority of the monarchy, but she was too much a realist to believe that marriage ties could be decisive in the affairs of nations.

Balmoral.

October 12th, 1870.

Dear Augusta

. . . I must now tell you of an event which has happened in our family and which, D.V., will be the foundation of our daughter Louise's happiness, namely her engagement to the Marquis of Lorne, son of the Duke of Argyll.

I know that such a marriage is at first bound to cause sensation and surprise in Germany, but I myself have been long convinced of its suitability. Great alliances are desirable for certain members of the family, though I attribute little political importance to them, for they can no longer affect the actions of governments and are only a source of worry and difficulty for the princely family, as my own experience has taught me. But Princes of small German houses, without fortune, are very unpopular here, and marriage with a Catholic is not only against the law, but would also arouse antipathy. In the circumstances it is only natural, that one should look around for some person of distinction at home who has an independent fortune and who is really no lower in rank than a minor German Royalty. The marriage law of George III does not forbid, as many believe, marriage with a subject ; it only declares that no member of the Royal Family may marry without the Sovereign's consent before the age of 25. After 25 a person can marry even without the Sovereign's consent, provided that Parliament raises no objection within the space of a year. Marriage with a subject is just as valid as marriage with a prince, and the children of such a marriage have the same rights regarding succession. . . .

After the great victory of Sedan the German armies

pressed on to Paris, where a republic had been declared. The city was besieged and armies marching to its relief were beaten off. The Empress Eugénie had fled to Deauville, where she sought refuge in Sir John Burgoyne's yacht. She was brought to England, and went into retirement at Chislehurst. Queen Victoria's political views were usually kept distinct from her personal feelings, and she did not forget that she had enjoyed the friendship of the Empress. Pleased though she was with the result at Sedan, the Queen, as we have seen, had written sympathetically to the Empress, with the knowledge of the Prussian royal family. This act of personal kindness recalls the fact that Queen Victoria sent a private message of condolence, via Prussia, to the Russian royal family when the Czar died, during the Crimean war. Princess Victoria showed that she inherited her mother's courtesy in matters of this kind, when she arranged the return to the Empress Eugénie of a screen which had been saved by a Prussian soldier from the flames of St. Cloud.

The overthrow of Napoleon had repercussions in Russia, when the opportunity was seized to denounce certain limitations of sovereignty in the Black Sea, which had been imposed after the Crimean War. England protested, but found no support. France was crushed, and Prussia had a grievance against this country for not coming to the rescue when France first attacked her. The reasons for English neutrality were not understood in Prussia, even by the Princess Royal, and the Prince of Wales's pro-French behaviour widened the breach. When King William became the first German Emperor and his troops marched into Paris,

English sympathies swung unaccountably away from the victor to the under-dog. Queen Victoria still clung to her belief that a strong Prussia was necessary for the peace of Europe, but there was considerable hostility between the two countries.

Balmoral.

November 17th, 1870.

Dear Augusta,

Receive my hearty thanks for your dear letter sent by the *messenger*. The season is advancing and with every week one feels more and more the danger of a winter campaign. Only the blinded French Government seems as if it will not see anything. The presence of Mr. Odo Russell at Versailles will, I think, be of great use.

This Russian ukase is most fatal and is exciting the public here terribly. The very groundless and unjust feeling against England in Germany is beginning to arouse great indignation here, especially as from the very first, with the exception of a few of the upper classes who are fond of going to Paris, all sympathies were with Germany, and because people have done so much for the wounded. I write this to you quite frankly, for I consider the danger great and serious *that the 2 great nations should become so far irritated against one another as to be unable to put things right again and allow the feelings of hostility to grow*. Please warn the dear King and Fritz and everyone. Unfortunately, Count Bismarck has from of old been hostile to England and I fear that he is fomenting the bad feeling against England. Your circular letter is very gracious and appropriate.

Louise is better and on the 23rd (for my part very unwillingly, for one does not suffer at all from the cold here and the snow looks glorious) we shall leave here, if God wills. Leopold has quite recovered since he has been here, and is going out in all weathers and even on foot.

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

Windsor Castle.

December 7th, 1870.

Dear Augusta

I could not thank you sooner for your dear, interesting letter of the 26th, which I received at the beginning of last week. Your efforts have certainly been crowned with success, and Mr. Odo Russell's presence has contributed greatly towards the happy and peaceful issue of this highly vexatious Russian question. The behaviour of Russia and especially of Gortschakow is extremely bad, and it was wicked of them to choose this moment !\* A good relationship with Germany is the right and natural policy for both countries, one which Albert and I have always wanted. But unfortunately the great irritation against us in Germany is very much opposed to it, and I must once more earnestly entreat you to tell the King seriously that, as long as Bernstorff (who, by the way, is not a good man) remains ambassador here good relationships are difficult to achieve, for he is always bent on misconstruing and exaggerating silly unimportant little intrigues and pieces of gossip. I could give you many examples of it ; it is hopeless to attempt to establish good relationships between the two countries if this is the case. Forgive me for being so outspoken, but anyone could confirm what I say.

I visited the unfortunate Empress Eugénie a week ago at Chislehurst, in a pretty little private house† where she lives in retirement ; I called on her privately, with one lady and one gentleman only in attendance, and the day before yesterday she returned my call, also quite privately. Her nieces and her other ladies-in-waiting came at the same time to see the castle.

The Empress bears her tragic fate with dignity. She never utters a word of complaint or bitterness against

\* Russia seized the occasion when the European Powers were concerned with the Franco-German war to free herself, October 31st, from the limitations to her right of sovereignty on the Black Sea, which were imposed by the Treaty of Paris of 1856. She met with serious opposition only from England, but with Bismarck's aid, achieved her aim in the Treaty of London of 1871.

† Camden House.

anyone ; the only person whom she mentioned as being the cause of her flight was Trochu, who had promised not to leave her. I said what a misfortune the revolution had been—she is always praying for peace and complaining “There is no government !”—and she replied : “O God, if there had been no revolution we should have had peace the very next day, because we could not have resisted any longer !” She looks very miserable and intensely sad, but still very beautiful, and so touching in her simple dignity. She was in a state of exhaustion when she arrived here, and was naturally reminded of her reception in 1855. The Prince Imperial is a nice child, but terribly small. Please tell Vicky and Alice everything, as very likely I will not have time to write this all over again.

The German troops have had some more tremendous engagements, alas very bloody. The battle of Orleans was a critical one. . . .\*

Windsor Castle.

December 18th, 1870.

Dear Brother

Although I have already conveyed to you by telegram my deep sympathy in the loss you have suffered I would like to repeat it to you in writing, and to tell you how very well I understand your great grief at the passing of your beloved sister.†

Although I have not written to you, you have undoubtedly heard from Fritz with what keen interest I heard of your great victory, how much I admired the courage of the German armies and how deeply I regretted, and still regret, the heavy losses on both sides. But now I should like to appeal to your generosity and Christian charity. The Germans have shed almost as much blood as the

\* Orleans had been conquered by the Germans on October 11th, but had been recaptured by the French on November 9th ; the army of the Loire wanted to make it a base from which to relieve Paris. On December 4th and 5th Orleans was attacked concentrically by the Germans and finally taken.

† Princess Louise, wife of Prince Frederick of the Netherlands, died on December 6th.

unfortunate French ; would it not be possible for you to stop now and make peace ? The poor, deluded French will fight on, and where will it all lead ? It is dreadful to think that such a terrible long-enduring war can happen nowadays, and it would be so Christian and generous if at this holy Yuletide one could say with truth " Praise be to God, peace on earth ! "

With the deepest regret I have noticed the hostile, suspicious attitude of Prussia and of her armies towards England. It is, I must confess, very unjust ; our sympathies were all with Germany, and still are among all well-informed people. But the bitterness against us and the long duration of the war will, I am afraid, soon transfer much of the sympathy to the French side, and this would deeply grieve me, for I consider it necessary for the happiness and peace of Europe that United Germany should come to a friendly understanding with England. But I do not want to take up any more of your time, which I am sure is very limited, and, with best wishes for your further good fortune and welfare, I remain, dear Brother, your devoted sister and friend

V. R.

Osborne.

January 18th, 1871.

Beloved Augusta

. . . I hate having to tell you about the increase of bad feeling in this country towards Germany, and in particular against Prussia, and how unhappy it makes me. There are many trivial reasons for it. Lord O. Russell and General Walker\* are doing everything they can to prevent it, but the slanderous accusations which are made against us in the German army naturally increase our hostility. My dear subjects and the journalists only add fuel to the fire. The two nations simply do not understand each other ! There is one exception, a very pleasant one, namely, the

\* Lord O. W. Russell was British Ambassador and General Walker was Military Attaché in Berlin.

very great admiration and respect which everyone has for our beloved Fritz ! God preserve him !

Osborne.

January 25th, 1871.

Dear Augusta

The dear Empress,\* whom I embrace wholeheartedly and *to whom* I wish all happiness and joy, will forgive me if I do not write fully today ? Very many thanks for your dear letters of the 21st and 22nd, which I will answer later. I cannot help thinking constantly of this day 13 years ago.† How unclouded everything was then ! What things have happened since that time ! The Emperor-King has answered me in a very friendly manner. . . .

Windsor Castle.

March 20th, 1871.

Dear Brother

I wish to offer you my sincerest good wishes on your approaching birthday, and even more on your happy return to your country after these momentous and decisive events.‡ God has miraculously preserved you and your victorious army ; may He continue to bless you, our dear Augusta, our dear Fritz and Vicky, and our beloved grandchildren. You and I can be proud of such a son as Fritz ! But how many, many sacrifices has this war demanded, how many families have lost their dearest ones ! When your army returns these sad decimations will become only too apparent.

From my heart I hope that our two countries may draw nearer to one another, and that the passing ill-humour which sprang from misunderstandings and mistaken judgments on both sides may disappear !

\* On August 18th, King William of Prussia had been proclaimed German Emperor.

† Marriage of Victoria, the Princess Royal, to the Crown Prince Frederick William on January 25th, 1858.

‡ The Emperor had returned to Berlin on March 17th from the battlefield.

184      FURTHER LETTERS OF QUEEN VICTORIA

We are delighted to hear so many interesting details of the campaign from my brother-in-law Ernest\* and from Count Seckendorff.

Once more wishing you every happiness, I remain, dear brother, your devoted sister and friend

Victoria R.

\* Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.



## CHAPTER XVI

1871-1873

**D**OMESTIC anxieties beset Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales during 1871, beginning in April when the Prince's infant son died within twenty-four hours of his birth. (In November, the Prince himself fell ill, of typhoid fever. News of his illness came as an added tribulation to Queen Victoria, for she was suffering under a wave of unpopularity headed by Sir Charles Dilke.) Her continued retirement and her reluctance to appear, even to open Parliament, had an unfortunate effect upon the mass of the people who did not realise that her work never suffered, even if she preferred to make no outward show in London. The communist fever had touched England, and in April there was a mass meeting in Hyde Park to demonstrate sympathy with the Paris communists. The Queen innocently described them as "horrid". Sir Charles Dilke attacked her personally, before audiences in Newcastle and Leeds, and he went so far as to suggest the advantages of a republic. The Queen remained calm as the word "Abdication" crept into the talk of the streets. When Dilke described one of the officials as the "Court undertaker", a man in his audience said that he wished the Court undertaker had more work to do. The Queen was not outwardly distressed by these bitter, personal attacks upon herself and the Crown. She said, "I expect it", and went about her business.

The public temper changed, miraculously, in November, when the Prince of Wales fell ill at Sandringham. Queen Victoria was herself recovering from an operation to her arm, but she hurried to her son. For some time it was feared that he would die. She was allowed "to step in from behind a screen" to see him. Her anxiety over his way of living and her fears for him, as a Prince, vanished now. She stayed with him for some time and then returned to Windsor. She was summoned again early in December, and on the eleventh she was awakened by Dr. Jenner, who feared that the end was near. Then came the change, from despair to hope. The Queen wrote in her Journal, on December 13th, "I was so terribly anxious, and wanted to be of any little use I could. I went up to the bed and took hold of his poor hand, kissing it and stroking his arm. He turned round and looked wildly at me, saying, 'Who are you?' and then, 'It's Mama'. 'Dear child', I replied. Later he said, 'It is so kind of you to come', which shows he knew me, which was most comforting to me. I sat next to the bed, holding his hand. . . ."

On the anniversary of the Prince Consort's death, the Queen wrote, "On this *very* day, our dear Bertie is getting better instead of worse". On January 1st the Prince was able to kiss his mother's hand when she went to him and he had been well enough to remember to order her a nosegay for New Year's day.

The effect of the Prince's illness killed all talk of Republicanism in England, and Sir Charles Dilke was howled down in the House of Commons.

Windsor Castle.

December 20th, 1871.

Dear Augusta

I returned from Sandringham yesterday afternoon, and hasten to thank you with all my heart for your dear sympathetic letters of ——\* and of ——\*, which I received there. Thank God, I was able to leave my beloved son without too much anxiety, his condition being so far satisfactory, and the crisis being now past, although he still has to have the greatest care taken of him to prevent any nasty after-effects from this horrid illness.

We have had a terrible time and had practically given up hope ; the worst days were the 8th, when we arrived in Sandringham, the 10th (Sunday), when the first choking fit took place, and the following morning when we were all called at a quarter to six and it seemed that his precious life was about to end ! And then on the 12th, his condition was very critical, and we and the whole country remembered and looked forward with dread to that terrible 14th. But miraculously on that very day, he began to get better, and D.V., this improvement will now continue, though very slowly. Please thank the Emperor many many times for his sympathy ! You ask me how and where Bertie contracted this fever ? It must have been in Scarborough, when he and Alix were visiting Lord Londesborough. Almost everyone who was there has been ill since. Dear Alix has been wonderful, so calm and composed, so courageously trusting in God and so self-sacrificing. She practically never left him. She asks me to thank you most affectionately for your kind messages. Thank Heaven I am still well in spite of this very exhausting time. Alas, I cannot now send you my Christmas presents, not till next week. Our hurried departure and the uncertainty of our plans are to blame.

With best wishes to the Emperor I remain ever your devoted sister

V. R.

\* The dates have been left blank.

The country's loyalty and sympathy has been wonderful ; there has never been anything like it.

In May of 1872, the Empress Augusta visited Queen Victoria and the two friends were able to renew their intimate talks, unperturbed by international arguments or family distresses. The Queen wrote of the Empress in her Journal, "She has been so kind and amiable, so pleased with everything, and easy to entertain. I value her friendship much, as she is such a superior person, and really attached to me". The Empress reciprocated these feelings of trust and appreciation. She wrote to Queen Victoria, from Buckingham Palace, shortly before she returned to Prussia. "It is a rare blessing to possess a real bond of friendship in our high station . . . . to be able to speak openly and feel ourselves bound to each other by mutual confidence. This blessing has fallen to my lot and I recognise it with sincere gratitude. . . . I have truly *enjoyed* our simple peaceful intercourse, and was constantly aware how much I am indebted to you".

One is moved by the continual surprise in which Queen Victoria and the Empress found that intercourse between royal persons could be so pleasurable, and the loneliness which haunts sovereigns is impressed on us as we watch the gestures of confidence drawing the two women still closer together.

Windsor Castle.

May 1st, 1872.

Dear Augusta !

. . . I am looking forward exceedingly to seeing you again ; if only I were feeling a little better, *more keyed up to receive you*. But, alas, I am not at all well ; my nerves are

run down and in a weak state, although outwardly I look well, which really is a misfortune, for no one will believe that I am so frequently out of sorts.

One other thing I must ask you, that you will allow me to receive you on your arrival here as Empress, not *in a private capacity*. After that, everything will be as usual, but on your arrival, you must allow me to receive you in a manner befitting such an occasion. . . .

Buckingham Palace.

May 13th, 1872.

Dearest Augusta,

You are still in Buckingham Palace, and I cannot let the opportunity slip of writing these few lines to tell you how happy I am to have seen you and to have had you staying with me so quietly and comfortably. No visit has left me with such pleasant and peaceful memories as yours, since my destitute life began ! God keep you many many years, and let us hope that there will not be so long an interval before our next meeting ! . . .

In the summer of 1872, courtiers in most European countries were surprised by the revelations in the *Memoirs of Stockmar* which had been edited and published by his son. In England, Queen Victoria had supervised the writing of the Prince Consort's biography with great care, and she was shocked and angry when many of the secrets which she had withheld were suddenly broken by Stockmar, the younger. She expressed her anger in a letter to the Empress.

Osborne.

August 1st, 1872.

Dear Augusta

. . . I must now tell you about Stockmar's book.\* I hate to say it, but he has been extremely indiscreet in using

\* *Memoirs from the papers of Freiherr Christian Friedrich von Stockmar*, compiled by Ernst Freiherr von Stockmar, Brunswick, 1872.

some very secret papers which concern us only and in publishing them without my consent ; this may do a great deal of mischief. The very things which I and everyone who was engaged on the life of my dear Albert were most concerned should not be published for 50 or 60 years, he has taken and exposed to the general gaze ! I am sorry to say that Vicky does not see clearly enough on this point, and defends Stockmar instead of having cautioned him. I must give him to understand that all who have read the book are very indignant about it.

On September 23rd, 1872, Princess Feodora of Hohenlohe died, thus removing the last of Queen Victoria's early family circle. The Empress telegraphed the sad news to Balmoral and the Queen was once more plunged into the grief which had beset her so often since 1860. " I stand so alone now ", she wrote in her Journal. " No near and dear one, near my own age, or older, to whom I could look up to, left ! All, *all* gone ! She was my *last* near relative on an equality with me, the *last* link with my childhood and youth ". The loneliness of age was already gathering about the Queen, and when she wrote to the Empress she turned for her consolation to the poets she had been reading, quoting from Adelaide Procter and Tennyson.

Balmoral.

October 17th, 1872.

Dearest Augusta

. . . . I am not unwell and can walk quite well and quite far, even ride now and then, but I have no attachment to life ; sometimes I feel cheerful for a few moments, but then a deep misery and dejection overcomes me, and my heart bleeds. But how could it and how should it be otherwise ? My nerves are very run down. This third great sorrow in

my life has to be borne without him, without her. When I think of how she supported and comforted me in the first weeks, months and years of my deep wretchedness ! She often held me in her arms and pressed me to her heart when I was in such despair ! never shall I forget her goodness and love at that time.

Oh, how right you were when you said that " with people solitariness is different from loneliness. Solitariness often helps, but loneliness makes one sad." Oh, God, how often I have felt and feel this since December 1861 ! I feel just like a deserted child. I have said this so often, and then people tell me that I cannot possibly feel all alone because I have so many people round me—but it is precisely then that I feel most miserable and have the greatest need to unburden myself. Thank God there are many souls, though only a few really loyal ones, to whom I can talk, though of course not as much as I should like. The dear Blücher, how one feels her loss now ! I have just read a most beautiful poem by Ad. Procter which I am sending to you. " Oh, what would life be if life were everything ? " How true ! There is so much sadness on this earth. God alone can console and strengthen us, and surely our dear ones see us and everything with " eyes other than our own " as Tennyson says.

In the first days of 1873, the ex-Emperor Louis Napoleon was reported to be dangerously ill. His health had been weakening for several years and even before Sedan, he had been a sick man. Doctors were called to Chislehurst and an operation was attempted ; but all efforts to save him were hopeless and he died on January 7th. The ex-Empress was heart-broken, and she was not helped by the action of her husband's cousin, who had quarrelled with the exiled pair some time before. He came to the funeral, with the purpose of inducing the Prince Imperial to leave England with

him. The ex-Empress refused and her son stayed in England, but the arguments and uncertainty caused them both great anxiety.

It is a tribute to Queen Victoria's personal loyalty that she showed unfailing kindness to the exiles, although they had fought against her closer friends in Prussia and were no longer honoured in France. In expressing her sympathy to the ex-Empress, she asked for a souvenir of Louis Napoleon. The Empress Eugénie sent her his travelling-clock with the message, "It has marked the happy times of other days and the long hours of moral and physical suffering, both the years of joy and those of grief; but how big a part of them were the latter!"

Queen Victoria went to Chislehurst a month later with Princess Beatrice, and they both laid wreaths on Louis Napoleon's coffin. The Queen embraced the Empress in silence. She wrote, afterwards, "Eugénie took my arm in hers, but could not speak for emotion. She led me upstairs to her boudoir, which is very small and full of the souvenirs which she had been able to save. She cried a good deal, but quietly and gently, and that sweet face, always a sad one, looked inexpressibly pathetic". The scene of these two women, one certain in her power, the other bereft of every sign of royalty, was in pathetic contrast to the triumphal visit of 1855, when Louis Napoleon was making the pace in European diplomacy. Now, Queen Victoria wrote, "The Empress showed me the poor Emperor's humble little rooms, which are just as he left them, all his things on the table, so sad to see, as I know but too well! It was a very melancholy visit, and I see the Empress's sad face constantly before me".



Osborne.

January 11th, 1873.

Dear Augusta

I write you these hurried lines to confirm what I told you yesterday by telegram, that I at once sent a message of condolence in your name to the poor Empress and her son. The sympathy here is very great, for the poor Emperor was very popular in this country, and was a faithful ally of England. His end came very suddenly and I am furious at the horrid indelicate details which the newspapers have published and are still publishing, day after day. Doctors, and especially surgeons, are like butchers, nearly all of them without feeling ! The poor man suffered terribly and I believe that a great many things which we thought extraordinary in his behaviour during the last years and during the war, can be explained by his great sufferings ! Alas, he seems to have died as a result of the operation. The poor Empress was apparently in the utmost despair, but yesterday she was calmer. I am sending you a copy of a few lines she wrote me. Nothing has yet been arranged about the funeral, but I expect that it will probably take place quite quietly in Chislehurst.

January 13th.

The funeral is to take place "quietly" at Chislehurst early the day after tomorrow ; there are to be no carriages following the hearse ; on the other hand there will be a terrible crowd of onlookers, and an enormous number of French people are there already. Prince Napoleon\* is there with his wife and sister, which is very painful for the poor Empress. The doctors say that they had nothing to do with the publication of the medical details, and that these were sent by the Emperor's private secretary ; they are very hurt that people believe it. Had they known how ill the Emperor was, they would probably not have undertaken the operation !

\* Louis Napoleon (Plon-Plon) son of King Jerome of Westphalia, married Princess Clotilde, daughter of King Victor Emanuel of Italy, had quarrelled with his cousin, Napoleon III, owing to his radical speeches in France. His sister, Matilde, was the widow of Anatole Demidoff, Duke of San Donato.

Osborne.

January 30th, 1873.

Dear Augusta

. . . . The funeral at Chislehurst was really touching. Altogether 4,000 Frenchmen came over for the ceremony ; the Empress is completely *broken down* and cannot take any food. No one had any idea of the seriousness of the malady so the catastrophe came like a bolt from the blue. Lady Ely has just visited the Empress. I enclose a letter, or rather a copy of it, which is most moving. I had asked for a little trifle as a souvenir, and so they sent me this simple travelling clock ; it will become an historical relic, for it stood at his bedside when he died, and is now in my bedroom ! Please send Vicky this letter to read !

## CHAPTER XVII

1873-1874

IN March, 1873, the German Emperor and Empress paid the British Ambassador the compliment of dining with him at the Embassy in Berlin. The wife of the Ambassador sent Queen Victoria a description of the occasion and quoted the Empress Augusta as saying, "I fancy myself in dear England". The report also referred to the hostility which Bismarck was showing to the Empress and to the Crown Princess. Bismarck had accepted an invitation to the banquet, but as the orders of precedence would have placed him next to the Empress Augusta, he developed a "diplomatic illness" and refused to come. Bismarck distrusted the influence of the Empress and of the Crown Princess on the Emperor and he did not hesitate to discredit them. About the time of the banquet at the Embassy in Berlin, the German Ambassador in London died and Count Münster was appointed in his place. Queen Victoria discussed the appointment with the Empress Augusta, but she refrained from mentioning what she had just heard of the conflict between Bismarck and the Empress.

Osborne.

April 16th, 1873.

Dear Augusta,

I thank you warmly for your dear letters of the 29th, the 5th, 12th and 13th April.

First let me say how gratefully I acknowledge the Emperor's kindness in the appointment of poor Count Bernstorff's successor. It is in every way the most suitable one. The only disadvantage I see is the fact that he served the King of Hanover before and is not in favour with the adherents of King George, and hence particularly out of favour with my Aunt Cambridge and her daughters, but George will not trouble about it. Count Münster's parents were almost like members of the family in the time of George the Fourth, and I knew both of them and his sisters very well when we were children. Now that I am on the subject, it may interest you to hear something about my new lady, the successor of the good Lady Gainsborough, who is now only *Extra Lady-in-waiting*. Lady Erroll (Countess) is a very amiable, good, thoroughly educated and domesticated woman, 43 years old ; her husband, who is an original, is the grandson of King William, for his mother was a Fitzclarence, and she herself (strangely enough) is a niece of the Duchess of Inverness. She is in waiting for the first time, and I like her very much. Her husband is one of the oldest earls in Scotland and his property is in Aberdeenshire.

Vicky's convulsive pains disquiet me very much, for they prove that she is not so strong and well as she should be. I dread the fatigues of Vienna for her.

Since yesterday the weather has been very bright. Everything is getting green and coming out.

Poor Count Bernstorff's son is a nice and thoroughly good young man. I will see his poor mother before her departure.

I must close in haste and will write further tomorrow.

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

In her next letters to the Empress Augusta, Queen Victoria referred to two of her children of whom she had not previously had much to say. Prince Leopold,

who suffered from hæmophilia, gave the Queen much anxiety. She noted in her letter of November 20th that his condition was improving, but it was a short-lived relief as he was unable to move during eight months of the following year.

Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, had recently become engaged to the Grand Duchess Marie, only daughter of the Czar of Russia. Queen Victoria had not met her future daughter-in-law, and she "felt quite bewildered" when she received a telegram from her son announcing his engagement. The initiative in establishing a personal relationship with Russia had been taken by the Prince of Wales. Russia was a potential menace to English interests in India, and in 1873 she was linked with Germany and Austria in the *Dreikaiserbund*. The collapse of France had left England isolated in the face of this alliance, and the Prince of Wales had felt that a friendlier relationship with Russia would strengthen the peace of Europe.

The Prince and Princess of Wales, with the Duke of Edinburgh, had first met the Russian royal family as fellow-guests in Darmstadt. In spite of uncomfortable diplomatic relations between the two countries, the wedding took place on January 23rd, 1874. The Prince and Princess of Wales were present, and Queen Victoria sent the bride two sprigs of myrtle which had been grown from a little piece taken from the Princess Royal's nosegay. "All the brides (I think)", wrote Queen Victoria, "have had a piece in succession".

Meanwhile, in the new, unified Germany, there was a conflict between Bismarck and the Catholics over the competing loyalties of State and Church, in terms which

are current in Germany today. French bishops attacked the German government's action and defended the supreme religious authority of the Pope. The bitterness of 1870 lent venom to the French accusations, and rumours of war began to circulate. Queen Victoria appealed to the German Emperor to behave with the calmness of assured strength. Her letters to the Empress at this time are chiefly concerned with domestic affairs.

Osborne.

July 16th, 1873.

Dear Augusta,

I have unfortunately no time to write to you at length and thank you for your dear letter of the 12th.

What you say about Affie's engagement is very true. You know that I did not desire this alliance on various quite serious grounds. Principally on account of religion and politics, for these always seem to me precarious and undependable in Russia. But in spite of all difficulties, in spite of doubts and representations on both sides, it has none the less come to pass, and that through the decision of the young lady herself, hence I must believe that it is a dispensation of God. On all sides I hear the highest praise of Marie, who knows all the difficulties and sacrifices of her future position, and yet does not shrink from them. She has written me a very fine letter in English, of which I send you a copy herewith. I have received a very cordial telegram about it from your dear Emperor, in which he expresses himself in such a most loving way about Marie.

Tomorrow the marriage will be announced at the Council and shortly after that follow the proceedings in Parliament about money matters, which are always unpleasant. Alfred writes and telegraphs very happily and Marie writes to me in the same sense ; her parents are very much upset over it, as well as at the idea of giving up their only daughter, which I admit would be impossible for me.

I simply cannot tell you how I grieve for you, my dear friend, and with you, at the loss of your excellent Brandis. How gladly would I help you. Someone was mentioned to me as a suitable person for the purpose, whose name I will give you, but I do not know at all whether he is healthy enough, and whether, in any case, he would accept the position. That is Dr. Geffcken, Professor at Strassburg, formerly Hanseatic Minister in London. Sahl (?) knows him very well.

Winterhalter's death is a terrible grief to me, he is an irreparable loss! I have known him for 42 years and he has painted us and our children, and I am surrounded here by his splendid pictures! As you say, so many memories go to the grave with him!

I return the telegrams herewith with many thanks. I must close for today.

Ever your faithful sister and friend, V. R.

Balmoral.

Beloved Augusta, November 20th, 1873.

How ashamed I am that I must thank you for 4 letters. But I have had so many things to write that it was impossible for me to answer sooner and until I return to Windsor I shall not have the help of my good Lady Ely. Now, dearest, receive my most heartfelt thanks for your dear letters of Oct. 30, Nov. 1, 8, and 15. Leopold, who has had to stay entirely in the house and on the sofa from Oct. 20 till yesterday—that is, more than 4 weeks, has at last been much better since the day before yesterday, and if this improvement maintains itself tomorrow, we shall be able to decide upon the day of our return journey (which was never fixed for earlier than tomorrow). He will have to be most careful, which, anyway, must always be the case. Meanwhile we have had glorious weather for nearly a fortnight past, and in general a very fine late autumn.

The death of the good King of Saxony grieved me very much, and I am extremely sorry for the poor Queen. The

newspapers allege that your Queen Dowager is seriously ill in Dresden, which I hope is not the case.

As to Alfred's anticipated visit to Potsdam, I know absolutely nothing, for there was never any talk of it. He was to visit his uncle at Waldsee, and I intimated to him that he must go to the King of Saxony's funeral, and he immediately left Vienna and went straight on to Coburg, where he spent 8 days. That is all I know about it. He went by way of Darmstadt straight back through France.

He seems to me to be happy, and Marie too ; she often writes me really nice letters.

I was so sad at hearing that the dear Emperor is ill again. I telegraphed to him twice and the second time the reply sounded better.

God grant that he will soon be quite well again. But the strain of Vienna was certainly too great.

Religious questions are most unpleasant in any case ; but one ought not to give in to the Catholics. Only it is very difficult, for they are fond of letting themselves be made martyrs of, which then brings people's sympathies over to their side, which again is not good. The struggle seems to me to be impending everywhere, and the Protestant churches ought to hold firmly together, in order to withstand the attacks firmly and hit back.

I will close this letter tomorrow.

21st.—Today, on our dear Vicky's birthday, I close this letter !

God bless her and continue to lead her in her hard lot.

We shall probably be leaving here on the 28th. I expect Alice immediately on quite a short visit.

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

I enclose this very nice letter of Marie Alexandrowna's for you to read. Please send it back soon.

I will certainly see Count Münster's daughter.

I do not think the King of Hanover intends to come here.



Queen Victoria's next two letters to Prussia refer to family events, a confirmation and a christening. Princess Victoria's elder son, later William II, was confirmed in the presence of the Prince and Princess of Wales. In his letter, to which Queen Victoria refers, the Prince of Wales wrote, "Willy was much pleased with your presents which were laid out in my sitting-room. Your letter to him and the inscription you wrote in the Bible I thought beautiful, and I read them to him". Queen Victoria wrote affectionately to the Empress Augusta, and added some wise advice which was never more aptly directed.

Later in the autumn the Duchess of Edinburgh gave birth to a son. She had arrived in England in March, and Queen Victoria noted, "Dear Marie has a very friendly manner, a pleasant face, beautiful skin and fine bright eyes, and there is something very fresh and attractive about her". In May the Czar himself came to England, a "sad and careworn" man whose deepest attachment perhaps was to his only daughter. Queen Victoria was full of praise for her new daughter-in-law, and when the child was christened, the Queen's thoughts turned back to the day when Prince Alfred himself had been christened in the same chapel.

Balmoral.

September 5th, 1874.

Dearest Augusta

I sincerely thank you for your two dear letters of August 29th and September 1st, before and after the confirmation of our beloved grandchild. May God always bless him ! He has a difficult life ahead of him ! Vicky and Bertie also were deeply moved by the holy ceremony. I had a letter

from Bertie saying how much he enjoyed his visit and how very kind you and the dear Kaiser were to him. He thinks the Kaiser is looking better and healthier than he was in March, God be praised ! As the Kaiser seemed so delighted with what I wrote in Willy's bible, I have had my letter translated and enclose it herewith for him. It is really essential that Willy should still remain a child : a boy at the age of fifteen and a half is actually like a girl of twelve, and there is nothing worse or more destructive than treating young people at a very early age as though they were quite *independent* and grown up. This especially applies to royalty. The longer one can keep them as children the better it is. Vicky told me how much Willy loves you, but you must not spoil him with all your kindness. I have so many grandchildren that I have already had a good deal of experience where this is concerned. . . .

Windsor Castle.

November 25th, 1874.

Dear Brother,

I take up my pen today to tell you about the baptism of your great-grand nephew and godson. It went off well, although with less ceremony than usual, since it took place in the great hall downstairs in the palace, with no singing, on account of the Empress Marie's health.

I could not help thinking of those ceremonies in the year '44, when Alfred himself was baptized in the chapel here, and in the year '50, when Arthur was baptized at Buckingham Palace, both of them in your presence.

And now you are being represented by your godson, and are godfather once more to Alfred's child !

Little Alfred is a very strong, beautiful child, who will some day, I think, be like his very big Russian uncles. He behaved quietly. Dear Marie is well, but needs fresh air now, and so they are going into the country today. The Empress, who is unfortunately very unwell, left very early yesterday for Paris and San Remo.

Now let me thank you for your most kind letter. I am very glad that you were pleased with my letter to our dear grandson William. I take a keen interest in the dear lad, who is very promising, the important thing will be to keep him a child as long as possible, so that he is able to develop and prepare for his difficult calling quite undisturbed, both physically and mentally.

How very glad I am to hear that you are so well (*unberufen*).

I only beg you not to commit any imprudences now, at this time of year, when everybody catches cold so easily.

With most heartfelt wishes for your further happiness and well-being I remain, dear brother, ever

Your faithful sister and friend,

VICTORIA R.

## CHAPTER XVIII

1874-1876

THE elections at the beginning of 1874 had brought important changes to English thought and policy. The ruin of the Liberals and the elevation of Mr. Disraeli to power began also a period of confidence and satisfaction to the Queen. After being leader of the Conservative Party for ten years, the Minister who was dearest to her was now her confidant and her friend./ She began the most illustrious period of her reign : the period which brought the Suez Canal into British control, the government of Egypt into British hands and, for herself, the Imperial Crown of India.

There were few letters exchanged between the Queen and the Empress Augusta during the first months of the new Government. The first of interest referred to more personal matters. Theodore Martin had completed the first volume of his biography of the Prince Consort and one of the early copies was sent off to "Dearest Augusta".

The Queen had watched the growth of this memorial to her dead husband with infinite care. She was all the more alarmed over the frankness and gossip of Greville's diary which was being published at about the same time. She wrote of the "dreadful, infamous" book to her friend, and in other letters she gave the cause of her anger. The unfavourable descriptions and

comments on King William the Fourth shocked her and although Greville had compared her favourably with her predecessor, the Queen was not grateful for the compliment.

Windsor Castle.

December 16th, 1874.

Dearest Augusta

Today I have only time to write and tell you that I am sending you the first volume of my beloved Albert's biography. It is admirably written by Mr. Martin and it has been received with much joy and appreciation by the general public. Especially as a contrast to that dreadful, infamous book by Mr. C. Greville, which I will write to you about later. . . .

None of Queen Victoria's children brought her greater happiness in the closing years of her life than Princess Beatrice. Even when she was married, the Princess still gave her mother the unselfish attention and affection which meant so much to the lonely sovereign.

Early in February of 1875 there was apparently talk of a husband for Princess Beatrice : a fearful prospect for the Queen, who now depended upon her daughter for so much.) The queen was at Osborne for January and February of 1875 ; she was distressed because Prince Leopold was ill. She wrote in her Journal, on the first day of the new year, " Another New Year, which begins with terrible grief . . . and our poor, dear Leopold ill. But God has been very merciful to him, and may He continue to be so, and carry him through well, to the end ! I pray for God's blessing on all my dear ones, and for guidance and strength during this year ".

On January 15th there were increased fears for Prince Leopold's life. The Queen wrote, after a distressing day, during which Princess Beatrice was her comfort, "Went late, and with an anxious heart, to bed". It was six weeks after this that she wrote to the Empress of the plan for the betrothal of Princess Beatrice. She paid an affectionate tribute to her daughter's character. "She is really an unusually dear, gentle child, very quiet, always contented and with the most remarkably even temper and good spirits I have ever seen in young girls". The Queen was now consoled by better reports of Prince Leopold. She wrote, "Leopold is recovering really more rapidly than was to be expected". This was late in February, and the shores of the Solent were not a happy place for the recovery of an invalid. "The weather is now so cold that he has only been able to go out twice", wrote the Queen. "We intend, if God will, to go with him to Windsor on the 26th". The letter closed with domestic enquiries. "I am so very sorry that the Emperor has caught a chill. I hope he will recover quickly. Please remind him how much I should like to have his portrait". And then, at the end, "Beatrice and Leopold greet you warmly and kiss your hand".

The Queen was still at Osborne in April, consoled by her son's improved health and by the ever charming and helpful letters from Mr. Disraeli. One paragraph from a letter which he wrote to her on April 21st reveals the growing courtesies between them. He wrote, "He gratefully thanks your Majesty for your Majesty's delightful present. He likes the primroses so much better for their being wild : they seem an offering from

the fauns and dryads of the woods of Osborne ; and camellias, blooming in the natural air, become your Majesty's Faery Isle ”.

The Queen's self-confidence was refreshed under the influence of Disraeli's letters and frequent visits. Her own letters were written in a happier vein and, as spring came to her “ Faery Isle ”, she wrote more and more family gossip to her friend in Prussia. Births and health and arrangements for holidays occupied her pen and in April, when she wrote once more to her friend, she was able to announce that Prince Leopold was well enough to return to his studies at Oxford.

Osborne.

April 14th, 1875.

Dear Augusta,

I thank you from my heart for your dear letter of the 10th which I received the day before yesterday. . . . Our grandchildren arrived at St. Leonard's yesterday, where I hope they will recover, for they seem to have been very much pulled down by their various illnesses. Baden will be very lovely when you go there, and I hope the cure will do you good. The winter and early spring, which is so late here too, have caused a fearful amount of illness. If it had not been for Leopold's attack, I should probably have gone to Baden and Coburg too, for a few days at Easter. But I could not take him with me and did not want to go so far away from him.

Alice, Louis and 3 of their children arrived here yesterday, the 3 eldest daughters have gone to Buckingham Palace. Alice is looking pale and worn. Louis, on the other hand, is looking blooming and the children are superb. Little Alix (the 4th daughter) is a most lovely child. . . . Today we are celebrating the 18th birthday of my dearly beloved Beatrice (Benamina, as I sometimes call her) in glorious

weather. It is also the birthday of Lenchen's eldest son and of Marie Teck's youngest child. . . . With the warmest greeting from those of my children who are here,  
Your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

I forgot to say that Leopold, who is now walking about indoors, but is not yet going upstairs, is returning to Oxford in accordance with his own ardent desire.

In May, Queen Victoria's letters abandoned simple family talk for a more frightening theme. Bismarck and the German leaders professed alarm over France's renewed military preparations and there was fear of war. The Queen wrote concisely of the situation in her Journal on May 6th, after she had received Mr. Disraeli. "Saw Mr. Disraeli and talked about the very alarming rumours from Germany, as to war. This began by dictatorial and offensive language to Belgium, then by reports of the Germans saying they must attack the French, as these threatened to attack them, and a war of revenge was imminent, which the increase in their armaments proved. I said this was *intolerable*, that France could not for years make war, and that I thought we ought, in concert with the other Powers, to hold the strongest language to both Powers declaring that they *must not* fight, for that *Europe* would *not* stand another war!"

It was felt in England that Bismarck was exploiting the occasion to force a war on the French and both Queen Victoria and the Russian Emperor pressed the cause of peace upon the Emperor of Germany. The answer from the Emperor, with Bismarck's voice behind him, was that there was no thought of war in Berlin.



Queen Victoria wrote a letter to the Empress, placing her own and the English point of view before her.

Windsor Castle,  
May 12th, 1875.

Dearest Augusta

During the last three weeks people here have felt seriously alarmed by the rumours from Germany saying that war during this year or the next is now inevitable, and the diplomatic note to Belgium has certainly produced a most critical situation ! There is also the continual and quite unfounded outcry that France is arming rapidly so as to start a *war of revenge* in the near future ! I can tell you with all confidence that this is utterly impossible for a long time to come ! Here we have thought it essential to express ourselves most emphatically on this point, and to support the Emperor Alexander's peace exhortations. In the letter which I wrote him asking for news of Marie (May 10th) I also told him my views on this matter as I consider it too great a crime to start a war and kill millions of people. Yesterday we received very reassuring news from Lord Odo (Russell) in Berlin who has had long conversations with Prince Bismarck and Prince Gortschakow.\* I am telling you all this quite confidentially. . . .

Thirteen days afterwards the fears of war had apparently passed. On May 24th the German Crown Prince wrote to Queen Victoria that Bismarck, "above all others", "protested against the idea which was attributed to him, viz., of wishing to attack France". The Prince added, "None, however, felt stronger indignation than my father, who abhors every thought of seeing peace disturbed. . . ." Calm came once more to the letters exchanged between the Courts and

\* Czar Alexander II stayed with Prince Gortschakow, the Ambassador in Berlin, from May 10th to 13th.

on May 25th Queen Victoria resumed her family gossip with the Empress.

Balmoral Castle.

May 25th, 1875.

Dear Augusta,

Receive my warmest and most heartfelt thanks for your dear letter of the 20th, my old birthday, as well as for your dear portrait. Unfortunately the copy is rather pale, yet all the same the whole thing is very like. Your dear wishes and words gave me great pleasure, as they always do, and I thank you for them with all my heart. Let me thank you warmly, too, for your two dear letters of the 13th and 18th. The Emperor Alexander wrote to me in a very friendly way, and very much reassured and satisfied with the language of your dear Emperor and of the Great Man, who, I hear, is throwing the blame on Count Moltke !!

I understand only too well that you always find L—— in Baden. I miss her more and more, for after all, I could write everything to her. Alice and Louis' visit went off very satisfactorily, and she has grown so mature, so reasonable ; one can say anything to her, which is unfortunately not the case in another quarter !! The children really are (I am speaking quite impartially) perfect dears, some of them strikingly handsome, and so lovable and well brought-up. The two eldest, Victoria and Ella, a wonderfully pretty girl, are with us here and bring life into the house with their childish merriment. Moreover, they are very obedient. I am venturing to send you 2 groups of the 6 children. Our granddaughter Charlotte is growing very pretty, only she is so small. I hope that the cure is doing you good and is not too much of a strain on you.

For the last few days the weather here has been very stormy, with violent deluges of rain ; but today these seem to be stopping.

Beatrice kisses your dear hands and I remain,  
Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

By June the alarms and fears of war had passed entirely and Queen Victoria wrote to the Emperor of Germany, pleased that her intervention in the cause of peace had not been misunderstood.

Windsor Castle.

June 20th, 1875.

Dear Brother

We returned from Scotland yesterday and now I hasten to thank you for your affectionate letter of the 3rd of June. I read it with much pleasure and am heartily glad that you have not misinterpreted my efforts to keep peace. Whatever the circumstances it would be deplorable if Europe were plunged into an unnecessary war; you can well believe, such a disaster would have been all the more grievous to me if it had been caused by some careless utterance or move on the part of Germany.

I was pleased to see from your letter that you indignantly reject the thought of attacking France or any other neighbouring land solely because that nation is contemplating war and is only awaiting the first favourable opportunity to start hostilities! Such a policy might have a momentary success but it would quite rightly cause general indignation throughout Europe, and it would leave the state which was responsible without friends or allies.

However, these fears are now groundless after the convincing guarantees given by your ministers, and there is no point in my explaining how the political situation came to be regarded so much more seriously here than you yourself find justifiable in the circumstances; although I cannot help remarking that it was by no means an insignificant observation (immaterial whether made by such a distinguished person as Count Moltke or by any one else) which alarmed both my ministers and myself. Remarks have been made on many occasions, such as those which

ostensibly came from Count Moltke, and since the persons responsible were representatives of your Government they were naturally thought to be authentic.

Judging from your letter, I feel certain that you were not sufficiently well-informed as to the nature of these arguments and therefore you might well consider our fears to be exaggerated. However, I could easily prove that this was not the case if there were any object in reverting to questions which are now happily settled.\*

It has pleased me immensely to hear how well you are ; may your present health last a long, long time ! Assuring you of my constant friendship, I remain your ever faithful sister and friend

VICTORIA R.

In April of 1876 Queen Victoria went once more to Coburg. Without the anxieties and documents of Whitehall so near to her, she was able to walk over the ground which she had known with Prince Albert when they were young, and to revive the precious memories of their years together. But even in Coburg she did not neglect her duties and she met the Emperor and talked with him of their mutual troubles. She wrote of the meeting to the Empress Augusta next day.

Coburg.

April 19th, 1876.

Dearest Augusta

I feel dead tired and terribly worn out and we are to leave at 10 o'clock, but nevertheless I must tell you how charming the dear Kaiser was to me yesterday and how little changed

\* Prince Bismarck, to whom the Kaiser forwarded this letter, replied to the Kaiser thus: "It would have been very interesting if Her Majesty had described in greater detail the source of the war rumours at that time. It must have been a very reliable source or Her Majesty would not have repeatedly called attention to it, and the English Government would not have committed themselves to such a momentous and to us unwelcome decision."

I found him. The public here were enchanted to see him. I received him on the platform and having led the way we then sat alone together for nearly twenty minutes. After this he drove to the castle and at 7 o'clock joined the family dinner table, which consisted of Vicky, Fritz, Ernest, Alexandrina, Willy, Beatrice, Arthur Mensdorff and myself. I drank the health of the Empress and he drank to mine. Shortly afterwards he bade us an affectionate and almost sorrowful farewell and went off to the Opera. He stayed until the finale and after that there was a torchlight procession in his honour. He left at 9 o'clock this morning. I saw him off myself a little while ago. . . .

The next letter, written after the Emperor and Empress had been on a visit to England, shows how the temporary fears of the correspondence in the previous year had passed. Their meeting had convinced Queen Victoria of the innocence of the Emperor's motives and when she left London for Windsor she wrote to the Empress immediately.

Windsor Castle,  
May 13th, 1876.

My dearest Friend

I parted from you today with a heavy heart and feel in a melancholy mood now that I have suddenly arrived here, where all is peaceful and quiet, after those four very animated days in London. You were so very loving and kind to me, although, indeed, you were always ; but you understand my many trials and worries so well and you show me such faith in me that I cannot express my gratitude sufficiently. Everyone is impressed by your kindness and graciousness. May God bless and protect you for ever ! Nobody comprehends or sympathises more sincerely than I do with the many trials and difficulties of your life ! And yet you are so indulgent to others !

Forgive me if I make mistakes in writing, but I write very quickly and have no time to decide questions of grammar which I still feel doubtful about in German.

I forgot to show you this letter from Leopold. I received it yesterday. Bertie sends his respects and I remain, dearest Augusta, your ever devoted sister and friend,

V. R. I.

## CHAPTER XIX

1876-1878

IN the latter part of 1875, a revolt in Bosnia and Herzegovina reopened the Eastern Question, which had been temporarily settled by the Crimean War. Inspired by Turkish incompetence, Russia was again tempted to take a hand in Balkan intrigue, and a mixture of predatory diplomacy and fighting protracted the affair until the Berlin Treaty of 1878. Austria, Prussia and England were all involved in the negotiations, which by their complexity led to a continual shifting of position. Opinion in England was sharply divided. Practical considerations still made England wary of Russian expansion in Eastern Europe. But this policy involved an alliance with Turkey, and Christian England looked upon the Turk as an unsavoury ally. Accounts of the Turkish atrocities in the Balkans were disturbing to English sentiment. The foreign policy of England often finds its strength in a mixture of self-interest and sentiment, and the opposition of these forces is sometimes apt to breed inconsistency. In the case of the Balkan dispute, popular sentiment was hostile to the cruelty of the Turks, while Imperial interests made England afraid of what would happen if the Russians reached Constantinople. Controversy raged through the country, enlivened by

Ministerial resignations and disagreements within the Cabinet. It was not until Russia had imposed a secret treaty on Turkey that Lord Beaconsfield found vigorous support for his policy, which was to curb Russia. The fighting was actually over before the European powers realised that England would not tolerate an unqualified Russian success. Lord Beaconsfield's subsequent diplomatic success, with the Treaty of Berlin, was one of the great bloodless victories in English history. He returned from Berlin to the cry of "Peace with Honour", but behind this noble description there lay a story of diplomacy which crowned his career as a statesman.

Queen Victoria wrote endless letters during the revival of the Eastern Question, and in 1876 she protested to the Empress Augusta against the action of Germany, Russia and Austria in preparing a Note to Turkey without first consulting England. The Empress Augusta showed this letter to her husband, at Queen Victoria's request, and subsequently she forwarded his reply. The German Emperor disavowed any wish to exclude England. Queen Victoria, who passed the letter on to Lord Beaconsfield, seemed satisfied with the explanation.

Balmoral.

May 23rd, 1876.

Dearest Augusta

So far as the Eastern Question is concerned, my Government is seriously intent on negotiating in concert with the other Powers ; they have in no way advised the Porte to refuse these proposals, but they themselves do not believe that the recommendations could be adopted, as



they are doubtless unacceptable to Turkey, and moreover, they are unlikely to fulfil their main purpose, which is to put an end to all the riots and revolts.

Incidentally, we believe that we should have been given the opportunity of considering the proposals in greater detail before any decision was arrived at, and that it was neither courteous nor right to exclude England, who has always been so closely concerned with the Eastern Question, and then to ask us to support the proposals after the other Powers had agreed to them. This is the truth, and I should be glad if the Emperors Wilhelm and Alexander could be informed. . . .

In her next letter Queen Victoria referred to the conference which was held in Constantinople, and which was intended to liberalise Turkey's administration of the Balkans. Lord Salisbury was the English delegate and, at the suggestion of the Prince of Wales, he used the opportunity to visit the leading statesmen of the countries through which he passed on his way to Constantinople. Contrary to what Queen Victoria wrote in her letter, Lord Salisbury was able to see both the German Emperor and Bismarck when he was in Berlin.

Balmoral.

November 20th, 1876.

Dear Augusta !

I am writing to you today still from here, where the weather continues to be quite mild. Last night, it is true, it was freezing. On account of the floods I have postponed my departure for a day, but I think I shall probably be able to start on the 23rd. It is curious, but almost every year, sometimes in August, sometimes in September, and sometimes in November, these floods occur, and do great damage to the railway by sweeping away the bridges, but these must have been repaired by now.

You will soon see Alice and Louis. She is better and grown so mature, so reasonable, and developed in every way. I hear through Vicky that the Emperor is very much displeased at the Russian armaments. The Turks, thank God, have accepted the conference. Ld. Salisbury is leaving today ; he could not wait any longer and on this account he unfortunately cannot see the Emperor in Berlin, but he will still see the Great Man. His nomination meets with general applause. But people here in this country make the task much more difficult. That such people as even the Duke of Argyll should entirely forget their patriotism and (I am bound to say) their loyalty, is infuriating. I am glad that you admire my very wise and sensible Prime Minister's speech. Now farewell, dearest.

How sorry I am that your left arm is still such a trial to you. My poor Aunt Cambridge is better again. I shall go and see her as soon as I can, once I am back at Windsor.

Beatrice kisses your dear hands and I remain,  
Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

In her last letter of this year, Queen Victoria referred again to the writing of Prince Albert's biography, by Theodore Martin. This was published in several volumes, spread over some years from 1874, and the Empress had apparently thanked the Queen for the first volume.

The conference in Constantinople made little headway, although the Turks produced a new constitution. But no great good came of the effort to intimidate them into a more liberal policy with the Balkan States. Russia went on preparing for war and she began her invasion of Turkey in the following spring.

Upon domestic themes, Queen Victoria became unusually frank, especially in regard to Prince Leopold, who had fallen ill again. Her patience gave way and she wrote, "One really cannot pity him", blaming him for not taking the advice of his doctors.

Windsor Castle.

December 6th, 1876.

Beloved Augusta,

How very much I thank you for your dear letters of Nov. 24th and of the 2nd. The good [Sir Theodore] Martin is deeply touched (as I am too) at your kindness and graciousness and your appreciation of his most delicate and difficult task. The weather is so incredibly warm and so fearfully damp, that it does not agree with me very well; still, I am not unwell, only I very much miss the peace and strengthening air of the mountains. The state of affairs does not seem to have changed essentially during the last 10-12 days. But Russia's warlike preparations are certainly to be deplored. It does not depend upon us, but upon Russia, whether the conferences lead to anything, and much, too, on the other Powers.

Leopold really is *a cause of sorrow and indignation* and has brought this bad leg upon himself; it made him quite ill for a week, purely through obstinacy and not following the advice of his doctor and attendant. He had repeatedly had it swollen (4 times since the beginning of June), and would not take care of himself, which was too bad. And now it has got as bad as it was 2 years ago, and for months on end, he will not be able to walk. And in addition to this, he has tried to conceal the whole thing from me. I am very indignant, I confess, and feel deeply the great ingratitude of this child of anxiety. One really cannot pity him. Forgive me for writing to you like this, but we are very cross with him! With only a little prudence he could lead quite a useful and happy life.

I have never thanked you for the extract from a German newspaper which you sent me. There was much truth contained in it. I found my poor Aunt Cambridge amazingly better than I had expected, but very melancholy and weak.

Today we have very fine weather, but far too warm. The leaves are coming out and the birds are singing exactly as in April.

With warmest greetings to the Emperor, who is, I hope, taking care of himself, I must close.

I am pleased at the marriage of the young Prince of Württemberg.

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

The year 1877 opened brilliantly. On January 1st, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India at a magnificent Durbar in Delhi. An account of the ceremony reached her at Windsor by telegraph, and in the evening she gave a splendid dinner party in the castle, with Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Dunmore among the guests. The Queen wore some of the beautiful gifts which the Prince of Wales had brought home from India, and to these she added the Star of India. Almost every record of this dinner perpetuates an historical error which might be corrected here. It has generally been recorded that at the end of the dinner, Lord Beaconsfield rose to his feet and, throwing precedent aside, proposed the toast of "The Empress of India". Many writers continue with the scene by saying that the Queen acknowledged the compliment with a "pretty smiling bow, half a curtsy". It was the Duke of Connaught who proposed his mother's health.

Shortly after this, Lord Dunmore visited Germany

where he was received with great kindness by the Emperor and Empress. January 27th was Prince William's eighteenth birthday, and Queen Victoria announced her intention of conferring the Order of the Garter upon him. "It is a rare thing", she wrote, "for three members of the same family and the three generations to have it at the same time. May God bless, protect and guide dear Willy".

February brought sterner affairs to the Queen's attention. Mr. Gladstone had emerged from retirement and he was leading the campaign against the Turks. Lord Beaconsfield remained comparatively neutral, rather than assist Russia in her ambitious drive towards the Bosphorus. Shortly before the opening of Parliament, Queen Victoria was warned by her son-in-law, the German Crown Prince, that in all circumstances, Germany would side with Russia. The Queen and Beaconsfield were never closer in decision than during this time. And never had she backed a Minister so valiantly, especially with Mr. Gladstone to represent the Opposition. This circumstance alone incited her to action and, much against her usual wishes, she consented to open Parliament herself and thus prove her support of Beaconsfield's policy.

Osborne.

January 31st, 1877.

Dear Augusta,

Lord Dunmore brought me yesterday your dear letter of the 23rd and could not say enough about how gracious and kind you had both been to him and with what distinction you treated him. Accept my best thanks, too, for your

3 dear letters of the 20th, 24th and 27th. The ceremony must have been very moving. Only (according to our ideas and customs) I find the contrast between the ceremony of the Order and the great dinner so soon afterwards rather marked and very painful.

I am sorry to hear that your poor niece had such a bad confinement and lost her baby. I hope that she is getting on as well as possible in the circumstances. I am most grieved at the sudden death of the poor Duke of Würtemberg, for in view of poor Wera's peculiarity this is particularly sad and will depress Queen Olga very much.

It made me most happy to confer the Garter upon our grandson William and by so doing to give pleasure to the dear Emperor too. Ld. Dunmore told me how wonderful he looked. May I remind him of a copy of Angeli's portrait of him? He promised it to me. Tell dear Willy to show you my letter to him. . . .

I am very grateful to you for the memorandum and for the information which you give me in your letter. It shall be *destroyed and your name in no way mentioned*.

I am today sending a finely-bound copy of [Sir Theodore] Martin's second volume for the dear Emperor. Today week I unfortunately have to go to London for the opening of Parliament, which I am doing myself in order to give special support to my Government (after the abominable attacks of the Opposition), but return here again on the 9th. Leopold has been here since the 29th and looks well, but is not allowed to walk.

Farewell for today, dear friend.

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

The Russians advanced towards Constantinople and Lord Beaconsfield continued his hard fight with an unwilling Cabinet. It was not until the Russians took

Plevna that the tardy Ministers realised the force of Beaconsfield's arguments. The details of these strained weeks are given in Queen Victoria's letters and, with great care, in Money Penny and Buckle's biography of Disraeli. There was a respite from these vast troubles in August when Prince William and his younger brother came to England. Their grandmother was pleased with them. Marriage plans held her attention for a little time and, in the same month, she received news of two coming weddings, which her eldest son attended. One of the brides was the Emperor's grandniece and the other was Princess Victoria's eldest child, Princess Charlotte, who married Prince Bernard of Saxe-Meiningen. The two marriages were celebrated on the same day and the Prince of Wales wrote from Germany to his mother, "The Emperor is looking awfully well, and in a few days he will be eighty-two. Vicky and Fritz are most blooming. . . . Dear little Charlotte looked charming at the wedding, like a fresh little rose".

Osborne.

August 8th, 1877.

Dear Augusta,

I must write you a few lines today to tell you about our dear grandson, whose visit gave us so much pleasure. William arrived for luncheon on the 1st and stayed till early on the morning of the 4th, when he went to London for 3 nights. He is loving, kind and sensible. He was pleasant and ready to take hints. But I have a weakness for dear little Henry, who is so lovable and amenable. He came on the 2nd on the *Niobe*, which was delayed for a long time by fog and calm. He came up here and stayed with us till the day before yesterday, the 6th. On the third they

visited Portsmouth, where, however, there were very few ships, for nearly all of those not belonging to the *flying squadron* have gone to Basika Bay. We are all very pleased with Kapitänleutnant von Seckendorf, who is with Henry. I had all the cadets up here with the ship's officers, and Leopold and Beatrice visited the ship. We also like the gentlemen who are with William very much, especially Herr v. Liebenau. . . .

Balmoral.

October 23rd, 1877.

Dearest Augusta,

I thank you with all my heart for your 3 dear letters of the 6th, 13th and 20th, as well as for the interesting enclosure about the work achieved by the German Red Cross, which I immediately sent to Colonel Lindsay through Lady Ely. I am sending you the report on our Red Cross Society, which is really doing remarkable work. But that the Russians accept blankets and mattresses from this society, when they ought to procure them and buy them for themselves is incredible ! I enclose, in strict confidence, the description of the battlefield of Plevna after the 3rd battle by an impartial eyewitness, which is really too ghastly and horrifying ! God grant a speedy end to it all.

We have had very changeable weather ; snow, very hard frost, and then suddenly quite warm. The harvest, which promised to be very fine, is quite ruined here, and God knows what the poor people will do. . . .

. . . I hear from Vicky that Charlotte's wedding and that of your great-niece will take place on the same day, which is very nice.

Good little Dean Stanley\* was so pleased with his visit to Baden and delighted by the kindness of you both. He again found the return very trying on account of the death of his wife, Lady Augusta Stanley.

\* Dean Stanley of Westminster.



24th.—Poor Leopold has again been in bed since Sunday with internal bleeding (from the kidneys, this time, without any reason that we know of). But up till now he has been quite well otherwise and the pains have left off.

Dear Lady Ely has also been very unwell. Her nerves are so shattered, but she is getting on much better again. We have a wonderfully bright day today.

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

The double wedding in Berlin was the beginning of still another romance, for it was there that the Duke of Connaught met his future bride. Immediately on his return to England, Queen Victoria talked to him of his wishes, and within a few days, she made overtures on his behalf to the Empress Augusta.

Windsor Castle.

March 2nd, 1878.

Dearest Augusta

Today I am writing to you about an important family matter. . . .

Dear Arthur arrived here yesterday evening and told me that he had taken a great liking to your grand-niece Luise (Fritz Karl). He has asked my permission to see her again in the summer and to propose to her. As I have heard nothing but praise of the young lady from you and other people, I cannot possibly refuse our beloved, kind Arthur. He appears to be really fond of Luise, and he tells me that the more he saw her the more he loved her, and that he has every reason to hope that she reciprocates his love. Therefore, dear Augusta, I am writing to you as head of the family (and as my true friend) to request you to inform Prince and Princess Friedrich Karl of Arthur's wish, which has my full approval. He proposes, if there is no objection,

to go to Potsdam in the summer, as the family are likely to be there at that time, and then to ask formally for her hand. Naturally, you must ask the dear Emperor about this, but otherwise we beg you to keep the matter secret.

Always your devoted sister and friend,

V. R. I.

## CHAPTER XX

1878

IN May of 1878, an attempt was made on the life of the German Emperor while he was driving with his daughter, the Grand Duchess Louise of Baden. Fortunately he was not injured and the assassin, Max Hödel, was arrested and subsequently executed. Queen Victoria wrote sympathetically to both the Emperor and the Empress. She added to the last letter an official announcement of the engagement of the Duke of Connaught to Princess Louise Margaret.

Aldershot Pavilion.

May 13th, 1878.

Dearest Augusta !

How very shocking and terrible this affair in Berlin is ! And how mercifully has God protected the dear Emperor and your dear Louise ! It is horrible that anyone should make an assault on the aged, beloved Emperor, who is the Father of his people ! Such incidents leave such a painful impression, as I know only too well ! Poor Louise must have been very much alarmed.

Windsor Castle.

May 15th, 1878.

Dear Brother !

Firstly, allow me once more to express my earnest thanks

that God has so graciously protected your dear life and that of Louise at such a dangerous moment. We cannot be grateful enough for this mercy !

And now let me thank you heartily for your kindness over the engagement of my dear Arthur and your grand niece Louise Margaret—an event which will mean great happiness for the dear young couple, if God is willing ! I am especially glad that you agree to the wedding taking place here because I should feel most grieved if I could not be present, as was the case with Alfred's marriage !

I am also very grateful to you for allowing Vicky to stay here so long with me, and I shall be overjoyed to see Fritz and the dear little children tomorrow. The spring is wonderful here and Vicky has really been able to enjoy her native country.

Again with my blessing and best wishes, I remain your ever faithful sister and friend

VICTORIA R. I.

At this time, Princess Victoria was visiting her mother in England and her husband, the Crown Prince, joined her later, bringing their children with them. Beyond domestic matters, the chief interest for the Queen and the Crown Prince was the coming Conference of the Powers in Berlin, arising out of the war between Russia and Turkey. While the Crown Prince and Princess were staying with the Queen, news came from Berlin of still another attack upon the Emperor. A Doctor of Philosophy was the would-be assassin this time and no less than thirty pellets had wounded the old Emperor, in the head, face, shoulders and both arms. The Crown Prince hurried back to Berlin, and for six months he acted as Regent. The political significance of the

event was considerable. The Crown Prince was known to be both hostile to Bismarck and well disposed towards England and it was felt that, as Regent, he would influence the policy of Germany at the Conference. These hopes were transitory ; it was not likely that a man of Bismarck's calibre would be affected by the Prince's opinions.

Queen Victoria did not write of these problems to the Empress. She was horrified by the second attack upon the Emperor's life. Her friend had borne a weight of sorrow comparable to her own in the past year : a weight which was increased by the loss of three hundred lives, following a collision between two German battleships in the English Channel.

Balmoral.

June 4th, 1878.

Dearest Augusta !

I simply cannot express the horror I feel at this appalling event. But God is merciful and with His gracious help the dear Emperor, whose age alone should protect him from such dangers, will quickly recover. But the horrible memory of it will remain, and in future the dear Emperor must be better guarded from these dangers. When he is well again I hope he will go to some quiet place where he can enjoy his freedom in safety. What agonies you must have gone through, and poor dear Louise too, after her recent experience of a similar attack ! But that time there was no harm done, and Fritz and Vicky now being so far away seems to make it worse. We can think of nothing else here, especially as you have hardly had time to recover from that frightful naval disaster !\*

\* On May 31st the battleship *Grosser Kurfurst* collided with the battleship *König Wilhelm* off Folkestone and sank.

Many affectionate greetings to the dear Emperor and Louise. Always your devoted sister and friend

V. R. I.

The following months again swept domestic affairs aside. In June and July, Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury were in Berlin for the celebrated Congress which was to decide the spoils of Russia from the war with Turkey, and to define the strength and boundaries of the Balkan countries involved. There was an important aspect of the preparations, in England, for it was the first time that Queen Victoria whole-heartedly accepted her son's advice over any international question. Lord Beaconsfield was now an old and feeble man, beset with the pains of gout. The Queen did not wish him to undertake the long journey to Berlin to represent the country at the Congress, but her son pleaded with her. He felt that Lord Salisbury "really would not do" in view of the failure of his representations at Constantinople. The Prince continued, "Under these circumstances, it strikes me more forcibly than ever that the Prime Minister is not only *the right* man to represent us at the Congress, but the *only man* who can go, as he will show Russia and the other Powers that we were really in earnest. . . . Now let me implore you to urge Lord Beaconsfield to go".

At first the Queen was reluctant, but she gave in in the end and Beaconsfield went, with Lord Salisbury to support him. The story of the meeting between Beaconsfield and Bismarck is fully described in many places. It was not until Lord Beaconsfield had re-

turned, full of glory, that the Queen wrote to the Empress.

Windsor Castle.

July 17th, 1878.

Dearest Augusta !

I have just seen Lord Salisbury, who gave me such interesting information, and I am to see my dear Lord Beaconsfield on Saturday. The crowds were most enthusiastic and gave him a triumphant reception in Dover and London yesterday. He speaks warmly of your great kindness. . . .

The year which brought "Peace with Honour" to England ended in new tragedies for Queen Victoria. In November, her granddaughter, Princess Marie of Hesse-Darmstadt, died of diphtheria. Princess Alice was infected and her life was in danger. She was very dear to the Queen and the separation since her marriage had not lessened her mother's recollection of her kindness during her bereavement in 1861. She sent Sir William Jenner to Darmstadt and, waiting at Windsor, she received news each day, sometimes encouraging, sometimes hopeless. It was a melancholy fact that so many of the Queen's anxieties came in the winter, about December and January, the months so full of bitter memories for her. On December 13th the news was encouraging. Next day was the anniversary of Prince Albert's death. "This terrible day come round again!" the Queen wrote in her Journal. Within a few hours her worst fears were confirmed. A telegram was handed to her from the Grand Duke Louis, Princess Alice's husband. "Poor Mama, poor me, my happiness gone, dear, dear Alice. God's will

be done". At first the Queen could not realise what the telegram meant, but a second one followed. Her daughter had died that morning.

The Princess was only thirty-five when she died. She was the first of the Queen's children to be taken and the Queen suddenly realised a new avenue of grief. The young as well as the old were dying about her. "That this dear, talented, distinguished, tender-hearted, noble-minded, sweet child, who behaved so admirably during her dear father's illness, and afterwards, in supporting me, and helping me in every possible way, should be called back to her father on this very anniversary, seems almost incredible, and most mysterious! To me there seems something touching in the union which this brings, their names being forever united on this day of their birth into another, better world". The Prince of Wales hurried to Darmstadt to pay his last homage to his beloved sister, who had always been so patient and understanding with his difficulties; so loyal in presenting his case to her mother. Queen Victoria remained at Windsor and she wrote of her sorrow to the Empress.

Windsor Castle.

December 16th, 1878.

My beloved Friend,

A thousand thanks for your dear letters of December 14th. "The ways of God are not our ways", as the dear Emperor so rightly said! Ah, my grief is immeasurable! You knew her and loved her! You both realise how she helped poor Louis, how she meant everything to him; how she cared for her beautiful children and for humanity; indeed, what a rarely lovely person she was! During this difficult time



she had developed mentally and spiritually and had acquired a wonderful Christian understanding which seemed to give her amazing strength ! Thank God, she passed away peacefully. I can write no more today as I am overwhelmed with letters and telegrams. God bless you ! Please thank the dear Kaiser, whom she always so admired, for his kind sympathy !

Always your devoted but unhappy sister and friend,

V. R. I.

## CHAPTER XXI

1879

THE year 1879 opened with the preparations for the marriage of the Duke of Connaught, in March. The happiness of the event was overclouded by the death of Princess Alice. The Prince of Wales had retired into seclusion at Sandringham and the bridegroom himself wrote to Lord Suffield, "This sorrow has thrown a sad gloom over my approaching marriage". Queen Victoria's first entry in her Journal in the new year began, "What a sad beginning to the New Year ! What sadness on so many sides ! Our darling precious Alice, one of my beloved five daughters gone, after but six days' illness, gone for ever from this world, which is not, thank God, our permanent home !" It was not the atmosphere for a wedding, but when the day came every effort was made to put sorrow aside. The bride was accompanied by her father, Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia, and by the Crown Prince of Prussia, the Crown Princess and Prince William. The wedding was celebrated in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and Queen Victoria attended in State, surrounded by many of her relatives. In its splendour the ceremony rivalled the wedding of the Princess Royal twenty-one years before.

Queen Victoria's letters to the Empress Augusta became quite genial. The bride's father, "Fritz Karl", was certainly "queer", but the Queen found she could

"get on with him quite well". The weather was magnificent, and the Queen was happy to be reunited with so many members of her steadily growing family. On two occasions, indeed, she found herself doing something "for the first time since 1861".

Windsor Castle.

February 19th, 1879.

Dearest Augusta,

. . . Now I must trouble you with a certain matter. I hear that Fritz Karl wishes to bring your Crown Jewels over here so that Louise can wear them at her wedding!!!! This would be utterly impossible and quite contrary to the custom here, so I earnestly beseech you to forbid it and to prevent him from bringing a fourth gentleman besides his son's tutor, as he wishes to do. We consider this quite unnecessary unless the Emperor wishes to send one himself. I thought for instance that Graf Schleinitz might be sent as Chamberlain to the Emperor and he could also sign the marriage contracts. . . .

Windsor Castle.

March 17th, 1879.

Dearest Augusta !

Forgive me for not writing before but it was altogether impossible ! A thousand thanks for your dear letters of March 8th, 13th and 15th ! I hope you have heard all the details ? *The Times* has reported it very well and has published an excellent article on the ceremony. It was the most beautiful and impressive sight one could ever imagine ! The whole affair reminded me very much of 1858, although a central figure was missing this time, but apart from this the magnificent St. George's Chapel is so much more beautiful and romantic than the Chapel Royal. The weather was superb and everything passed off perfectly. For the first time since 1861, I wore a real train which was borne by trainbearers. The dear bride looked really lovely ; her bearing was so young and graceful, and her wedding

dress was in such good taste—very simple, beautiful and trimmed with that exquisite German lace. My dear Arthur behaved very well and his whole bearing was quiet, manly and affectionate. My daughters, daughters-in-law and grand-daughters looked very pleasing, and so did Marie of Belgium, Marianne, Clementine and Louise of Coburg. The presence of Leopold,\* Marie† and Augustus and Clementine, who have always been very intimate with me, made us all extremely happy. Our good Fritz was very affectionate ; unfortunately I had no chance to speak to William alone. Marianne‡ appeared to be very contented. Fritz Karl is certainly rather queer but I get on with him quite well. All except Vicky, Fritz and William left us on the 14th, and our children on the 15th. They leave on the 19th and will be able to tell you everything. On the 12th and 13th we ate in the big old dining-room where I have not dined since 1861. It seemed like a dream to me. . . .

‘The family sorrow, which had been put aside for the wedding, came back with renewed force immediately afterwards. When the Crown Princess of Prussia returned home she found her son, Prince Waldemar, ill. Within a few days he was dead, and the sad news reached Queen Victoria in Paris, where she had stopped on her way to a recuperative holiday in Italy. But once again a happy event followed upon misfortune. In May, Princess Charlotte of Saxe-Meiningen, daughter of the Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia, gave birth to a daughter. “I have thus become a great-grand-mother !” Queen Victoria wrote, adding, “Quite an event”. The Queen was approaching her sixtieth birthday.

\* Leopold II, King of the Belgians.

† His wife.

‡ Princess Frederick Charles.

Since the beginning of the year an English army had been fighting in Zululand. There was never any doubt about the outcome of the campaign, in spite of a defeat at Isandhlwana, and by midsummer the Zulu power was broken. The war, however, gained terrible significance by the death of the Prince Imperial in an outpost affray. Considerable efforts had been made to prevent the ex-Empress Eugénie's son from taking part in the war, but he had trained at Woolwich and was determined to fight for England as an earnest of his gratitude to the country of his exile.

Lord Beaconsfield had always opposed his going to Africa, and the final consent had been given only on condition that the Prince remained a spectator. A section of French opinion had opposed the idea from the outset, and England was accused by the Bonapartists of arranging the death of the heir to the French throne. The Prince of Wales had a personal affection for the Prince Imperial, and when he heard the news he was, in the words of Lord Suffield, "so upset that I thought he would collapse altogether". When she read the telegram, Queen Victoria kept on saying, "No, no, it can't be!" Sad as the death was in itself, it was the thought of the tragic Eugénie that appalled everyone. Driven from France, bereft of her husband, she had built all her hopes on her son. His unnecessary death was the final blow to her wish to live, and Queen Victoria knew it. "Poor dear Empress!" she wrote, "Her only child, her *all*, gone!" The ex-Empress's previous sufferings had at least the grandeur of tragedy on the stage of a nation's history; this last blow was wanton in its futility.

The Prince of Wales mourned the loss of the young Prince sincerely and deeply. "I cannot get the poor little Prince Imperial out of my thoughts", he wrote to Queen Victoria. "The poor, poor Empress, what has she to live for now? My heart bleeds for her, especially as one feels that one can offer her no consolation. There is no ray of hope, nothing but the bare ghastly facts".

In this mood the Prince of Wales at first spoke with unusual bitterness of all who had been responsible for the safety of the Prince Imperial. "His life was wantonly sacrificed", he wrote, adding that the incident was "a blot on our army in South Africa". Subsequently he showed more charity in his judgment, but his immediate concern was to show the highest possible honour to the dead Prince. In spite of Lord Beaconsfield's views of expediency, in spite of French republican susceptibilities, the Prince of Wales insisted on a funeral with royal honours. He and his three brothers acted as pall bearers, a warship carried the coffin to England, and a salute of guns was fired. Queen Victoria was present at the funeral and, a few days afterwards, she again went to see the ex-Empress Eugénie. Queen Victoria and her family did all that was in their power to lessen the pain for the ex-Empress, but, as the Prince of Wales had said, "One can offer her no consolation". When Queen Victoria expressed her sympathy, the ex-Empress exclaimed, with the pitiless accuracy of an embittered heart, "*Je ne veux rien savoir. Je sais qu'on l'a tué, voilà tout*".

It had been given to Queen Victoria to understand the whole gamut of bereavement and in the months

hat followed she tried to give the strength of her rare sensibility to the stricken ex-Empress, visiting her frequently and endeavouring to alleviate her grief. In October, Queen Victoria wrote to the Empress Augusta and when she spoke of the ex-Empress, it must have been difficult for her not to hear again that bitterest of epitaphs, "*On l'a tué, voilà tout*".

Balmoral.

October 29th, 1879.

Dearest Augusta !

I often see the Empress Eugénie, poor grief-stricken creature, and she is indeed a very pathetic sight ! She has benefited from the good air here and the beautiful surroundings and is sleeping much better now, but she weeps continually when she is alone and can think of nothing but her great sorrow. She has one of her dear son's friends\* visiting her just now, a distinguished young artillery officer, who has just returned from Zululand where he took a very active part before he became ill, but unfortunately he was nowhere near the dear Prince. . . .

\*Lieutenant Arthur Bigge, afterwards Lord Stamfordham.

## CHAPTER XXII

1880-1882

AS she passed her sixtieth birthday, Queen Victoria realised that the second generation of her descendants was coming to maturity. Her oldest grandchildren were the family of her daughter, Victoria, Crown Princess of Prussia. The eldest of these, Charlotte, was already married and had given birth to her first child in the previous year. In 1880 Prince William, next in order of age and heir-apparent, was betrothed to Princess Augusta Victoria, daughter of Duke Frederick VIII of Schleswig-Sonderburg-Augustenburg and granddaughter of Queen Victoria's half-sister, Feodora. The engagement was secretly confirmed in February and announced officially on June 2nd. Queen Victoria observed that the death of the bride-to-be's father facilitated the betrothal; this was probably connected with the fact that twenty years previously he had laid claim to the Duchy of Holstein, and had been roughly rejected by Bismarck.

Queen Victoria saw the young couple soon after their engagement, and wrote approvingly to the Empress.

Osborne.

February 4th, 1880.

Dearest Augusta,

It is very sad that the death of Fritz Holstein, who was a worthy and excellent person, has thus affected the union



between his daughter and William. I confess now that I look upon this marriage as a sort of atonement because I feel bound to admit that poor Fritz H. was very hardly and unjustly treated.

Windsor Castle.

March 22nd, 1880.

Dear Augusta,

I must now tell you about William's bride. I have seen both the dear children again and find them attractive and pleasant and very well brought up. Victoria has a particularly charming manner and seems to be kind and gentle. I like her very much and I honestly believe that they are well suited to each other and will be *some support* to you, dear friend ! I am impartial over this, as you know, but I would beg you to extend your generous affection to the grand daughter of my beloved sister, whom you regarded as your friend.

Early in February of 1880, Queen Victoria opened Parliament in sad circumstances. It was the last time she was to perform the ceremony with Lord Beaconsfield as her Prime Minister. In the previous November, Mr. Gladstone had begun his famous Midlothian campaign. Lord Morley wrote that "men were recalled to moral forces that they had forgotten" by Gladstone's thundering oratory. Lord Beaconsfield was not outwardly perturbed by these first signs of what was to be his last eclipse. He did not view the refreshed energies of his old enemy very seriously. He described Gladstone's speeches to the Queen as "wearisome rhetoric". But the effect on Gladstone's listeners was miraculous, for he came with a message at a time when they needed change. Lord

Beaconsfield's Government had wrestled with four wars and four poor harvests. Trade was weak and the country was restless under poverty and unemployment. Mr. Gladstone spun a dream for them with the "black art" of his oratory, and when the elections came, in April, Lord Beaconsfield was defeated.

Queen Victoria was frightened and unreasonable at the prospect of change. At first she said that she would have "nothing to do with Mr. Gladstone" whose conduct, since 1876, had been "one series of violent, passionate invective against and abuse of Lord Beaconsfield". This mood passed as she became aware of the demands of her constitutional position. Her sons were her most ardent advisers. The Duke of Connaught wrote to her, "I know how strongly you feel against the line that the Liberals have taken up these last three years. . . . It is indeed very hard for you to bear, dearest Mama, but I know how nobly you can sacrifice your own feelings at the call of duty. I can't understand what is to be done with Mr. Gladstone if he is not to be in the new Ministry; won't he be a terrible thorn in their side out of office?" The Prince of Wales also used his influence, with tact and patience. He wrote that "nothing could be nicer" than the way in which Mr. Gladstone was speaking of the Queen during this unfortunate time of indecision. He had said "how much he felt for her in the difficult position she was placed in". For once, expediency governed the Queen and she received Mr. Gladstone, chastening him for his conduct, but willing to accept him, in spite of the "very advanced Radicals" who were to be in office with him. Mr. Gladstone's new Parliament

met at the end of April. The Queen wrote to the Empress.

Windsor Castle.

April 28th, 1880.

Dear Augusta,

The new Government has taken office. I have bade farewell to dear Lord Beaconsfield and have given him your message. He is extremely sad to be leaving me. Today I took leave of the others with a heavy heart and I have this minute received the new ministers.

I enclose a short memorandum, written by Sir H. Ponsonby, which describes the proceedings. Mr. Gladstone's behaviour to me personally has been very respectful, and although several of those elected appear to be very radical I have been satisfactorily reassured on this point. Lord Granville told me that they wish *to carry out the Berlin Treaty jointly with the European Powers.*

The Turkish policy is to remain unaltered. . . .

The next interesting letter, after a long spell, was written in March of 1881, when the Emperor Alexander II of Russia was fatally wounded by a bomb thrown at him by an anarchist.

Windsor Castle.

March 14th, 1881.

Dearest Augusta,

I write to you today overwhelmed by the awful catastrophe of the death, or rather the murder of the poor, unhappy Emperor Alexander! What a terrible affair! I heard recently from our people in Petersburg, and also from the Embassy, that although the danger seemed less apparent at that time his unhappy life (haunted as it was by continual worry and fear) was in daily danger. And the manner of his death is so frightful! My poor dear

Marie,\* what a terrible grief and ordeal for her ! Please tell the dear Emperor that I thought of him immediately ! I know how he loved his poor nephew and how the latter reciprocated his affection. You, dear friend, must also be deeply grieved by this event. . . .

On April 19th, Lord Beaconsfield died, "without suffering, quite calmly, as if in sleep". The association between the Queen and her Minister ended as gracefully as it had begun. His room had been full of primroses from the castle slopes and there had been daily messages of anxious enquiry. Beaconsfield died with a fine phrase upon his lips—"I had rather live, but I am not afraid to die". Although the Queen had been bereft of his guidance for some time, she had continued little signs of her friendship during the season of Mr. Gladstone's power. She turned, in her grief, to sad self-analysis, and in the new year she revealed all the humility which historians have denied to her when she wrote in her Journal of her temper and her sensitiveness and her irritability. "I will daily pray for God's help to improve".

The Queen wrote of Beaconsfield's death to the Empress, in answer to a letter of sympathy.

Osborne.

April 22nd, 1881.

Dearest Augusta,

I felt certain of your warm sympathy and I now thank you for it with all my heart, also for your dear letter of the 19th which arrived yesterday. I am deeply grieved and distressed by this sad event. I and the whole land have lost

\* Marie Feodorowna, Princess Dagmar of Denmark, sister of the Princess of Wales and wife of the murdered Emperor's successor, Alexander III.

much through the death of this great, wise and charming statesman, who was my very dear friend ! It is quite true that he had been in very weak health during the last years, and that at the age of seventy-six one could not hope to retain him much longer in active political life. But so long as he was there one felt, as with the old Duke of Wellington, a sense of security in having such a wise adviser ! But with Lord Beaconsfield our personal friendship and his political wisdom and rare intellect were far, far greater. He was so amazingly devoted to me personally, he understood me so well and I shall never find words enough to express my gratitude for all that he has done for me both *privately and in the interests of the public !*

For several days, right up to the last, we had hoped for recovery ; but all in vain, on Monday the 18th he grew weaker despite all the care and attention he received, and the end was very quiet and beautiful. Lord Rowton, who loved him so much, and whose love was so warmly reciprocated by Lord Beaconsfield, attended him day and night and held his dear hand until it became quite cold. I saw Lord Rowton on the following day and he is grief-stricken and completely shattered ! I could write much more about this but the time is too short today. . . .

Queen Victoria's physical courage, no doubt inherited from the Hanoverians, provides one of the most impressive themes in her story.) Princes no doubt learn, through experience, to live nearer to death than ordinary mortals. Assassination is a part of their life, whereas it is no more than a word to those who do not walk in the public view. The Queen's life was attempted several times and the comments she wrote in her Journal are almost frightening in their calm. Her courage was tested once more in the spring of 1882, when a miscreant tried to shoot her at Windsor.

The Queen's own description of the incident, in her Journal, reveals her calm more completely than any comment of observers. She wrote :—

“ March 2nd, 1882.—At 4.30 left Buckingham Palace for Windsor. Just as we were driving off from the station there, the people, or rather the Eton boys, cheered, and at the same time there was a sound of what I thought was an explosion from the engine, but in another moment, I saw people rushing about and a man being violently hustled, people rushing down the street. I then realised that it was a shot, which must have been meant for me, though I was not sure. . . . Nothing can exceed dearest Beatrice's courage and calmness, for she saw the whole thing, the man take aim, and fire straight into the carriage. . . . Was really not shaken or frightened. . . .

“ March 3rd.—I slept as well as usual, and never once thought of what had occurred. . . . Brown brought the revolver for me to see. It could be fired off in rapid succession with the greatest facility, quite small but with six chambers. I saw the bullets. Was much relieved to hear that the missing one was found. . . .”

Four days after the shooting, Queen Victoria wrote to the Empress.

Windsor Castle.

March 7th, 1882.

Dearest Augusta,

A thousand thanks for your two dear letters and for your congratulations concerning the incident on March 2nd. Thank God that no one was injured ! As I saw nothing and even with the noise of the shot I was not conscious of anything at the time itself, I was not frightened or affected

in the very slightest degree. My dear Beatrice also appeared very quiet and courageous and does not feel at all shaken by the event. But the sympathy, the interest and the indignation which it has aroused are indeed touching and comforting. Moreover, everywhere abroad people have shown the keenest and most flattering sympathy. I had no idea that I was so popular in other countries. I can swear from the bottom of my heart that I have always wished and endeavoured to do my best for the welfare and happiness of the world, as you yourself can testify, dearest friend. But such recognition during one's lifetime is very rare and I feel deeply moved by it. Please let this be known when and wherever you see an opportunity ! I have sent Vicky a drawing of the criminal which she can show to you. He is a thoroughly bad and eccentric type, but *not* insane. . . .

I enclose a very good article and also several press reports from the newspapers.

The year ended with a domestic letter to the Emperor, written after the Crown Princess of Prussia had been on a visit to her mother. It was sent after the success of the British troops in Egypt, following the revolt of Arabi Bey. Anxiety had passed. The Queen had received news of the victory at Tel-el-Kebir, of the courage of her soldiers and of the capture of Cairo. Arabi was a prisoner in British hands and the power of the Khedive had been restored. The Queen's anxieties had been made more personal because the Duke of Connaught had served with Sir Garnet Wolseley, in the defeat of Arabi's army at Tel-el-Kebir, and she had been told of his "unflinching bravery under fire".

The Queen's letter to the Emperor was written after the Duke had returned, with a carpet from Arabi's tent as a trophy. It had been spread in the quadrangle

of Windsor Castle and the Queen had stood on it while she pinned medals on the breasts of her soldiers.

Windsor Castle.

November 18th, 1882.

Dear Brother,

I cannot possibly let Vicky go back without expressing to you my deep, heartfelt thanks for your great kindness and graciousness to your godson, my beloved Arthur. Your sending him your glorious order *pour le mérite* is really a great distinction, which pleases me no less than him.

The review went off very brilliantly and it was gratifying to see what a good recovery on the whole the hardly tried troops have made.

Arthur himself looks splendid and was never ill.

Having Vicky with us today was a great pleasure and she will of course tell you all about the review. Unfortunately she is going away again tomorrow.

I am indeed grieved to hear that dear Augusta is still suffering with her poor leg, and that she still has to lie up for so long.

With best wishes for your well-being, I remain, ever,  
dear brother,

Your faithful sister and friend,

VICTORIA R.



## CHAPTER XXIII

1883-1884

IN 1881 the Prince of Wales went to Berlin for the wedding of his nephew, Prince William. Although the Prince had long ago shown that his sympathies were with the French, he did not waste the opportunity, and he sought an interview with Bismarck. His partiality for France did not narrow his hopes of friendly relations with Germany and, with the accession of his brother-in-law, in 1888, he supposed that these relations would be strengthened. Again, in 1883, he went to Berlin and he was honoured by the Emperor, who gave him an honorary Colonelcy in the 5th Pomeranian Hussars. Queen Victoria had objected to a similar offer from the Czar in 1874, but her opinion of the importance of courtesy ranks in foreign armies had changed and she wrote to the Emperor to express her personal pleasure over the honour paid to her son.

Windsor Castle.

March 20th, 1883.

Dear Brother,

You must allow your old friend and sister to wish you with all her heart happiness and blessing on your dear birthday. I hear on all sides how well and strong you are (*unberufen*).

May it long continue to be so !

And now let me thank you most particularly for your affection and graciousness to my eldest son. His appointment as Colonel of Blücher's Hussar regiment, and then,

in addition to that, the conferment of the rank of Field-Marshal in your army are distinctions which he will know how to appreciate, just as I do.

They call to mind old times, too, when our armies fought side by side as faithful allies !

Bertie spoke with great delight of his stay in Berlin. Now my dear Arthur as well as Louischen are with you, and I am glad that he can offer my congratulations and his own on the 22nd in person.

With renewed thanks I remain ever, dear brother,  
Your faithful sister and friend,

VICTORIA R. I.

On March 17th, 1883, Queen Victoria met with an unpleasant accident while walking down the stairs at Windsor Castle. She missed the last steps and "came down violently on one leg". She was able to enter her carriage with the help of John Brown. "On coming home, however", she wrote in her Journal, "I had to be lifted out". Doctors were sent for and the Queen's knee was found to be much swollen. The strong arm of John Brown was needed for this service, which proved to be his last for his mistress. On March 29th, Prince Leopold broke the news to the Queen that Brown had died during the night. To her it was the loss "not only of a servant, but of a real friend". He had attended her from the early days at Balmoral, and especially during the first weeks after Prince Albert's death, when she was induced to drive a little at Osborne, under Brown's protection. Brown had enjoyed a liberty of speech and intimacy of approach which, in his position, have no parallel since the days of the Tudor and Stuart jesters; of Henry VIII's Will Somers, who mocked Wolsey to his face. Like

them, Brown was treasured for his simple wisdom and privileged candour. The Empress Augusta knew, perhaps better than any other women, the value of such a servant to a sovereign and her sympathy was gratefully acknowledged by the Queen.

Osborne.

May 5th, 1883.

Dear Augusta,

I am very grateful for your kind letters of April 6, 14 and 21, and for your ever ready sympathy. My leg is recovering slowly, but only very slowly. The last few days I have been able to get about my room on two sticks, but I still have to be carried up and down stairs. I hope most sincerely that your leg is better and that the cure is doing you good?

Apart from this I feel terribly depressed, and get more so instead of less, for I miss my faithful, kind friend and constant companion more and more at every turn, especially just now, when I so greatly need his care and his strong arm. I enclose a photograph of him, but will send more later, as I think you would like to have them as reminders of so many happy hours spent together. . . . What you say about my peculiar isolation, due to my lofty station with its heavy burdens, and how, for that very reason, the loss of so loyal and esteemed a friend as my never to be forgotten and quite irreplaceable Brown, is doubly, or rather I might say a thousand times, heavier, is only too true. My sufferings are indeed cruel and I feel weighed down with them.

I am sending the photograph unframed, as it is easier to pack. Perhaps you will have it framed and put up where you can sometimes look at it. . . .

When she had recovered from her fall the Queen moved her court to Osborne, and while she was there she wrote to the Empress Augusta a letter full of the domestic news which pleased them both. For the

first time since she was married, the Queen was without the company of any of her children. Prince Leopold, now the Duke of Albany, had been married in the previous year to Princess Helena of Waldeck and they had ended a visit to Osborne two days before. They had brought with them their "very dainty" daughter, Princess Alice (the present Countess of Athlone).

The only one of the Queen's children who was not yet married was Princess Beatrice, but she was also away, seeking at Aix-les-Bains a cure for neuritis. Queen Victoria was lonely without her children, but she now had the new pleasure of welcoming her grandchildren. Princesses Victoria and Irene, daughters of the late Princess Alice, were expected from Darmstadt on August 1st, accompanied by Princess Victoria's fiancé, Prince Louis of Battenberg. Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Crown Princess of Prussia, had also been to see her grandmother. There was much to discuss in the letters.

It is interesting to find the ever green subject of the Channel tunnel cropping up in this letter. Financial and constructional objections have usually forced the scheme into the shadows each time it has been proposed, but this time it was rejected for military considerations, and Queen Victoria was pleased to see the plan shelved again.

Osborne.

July 27th, 1883.

Dear Augusta,

Having arrived here on the 24th, I am sending you my most heartfelt thanks for your 3 dear letters of the 7th, 14th and 21st, as well as for your lovely piece of work, which my dear Lady Ely sent on to me. On the 30th she is coming

here and I hope then to hear a great deal about you, dear friend.

Beatrice's absence is very grievous and unpleasant, and increases my depression and the horrible ever-growing feeling of emptiness and bereavement, which nothing can ever really remove. But recently she had been suffering a great deal from neuritis, especially in the hand and right arm, which was a great inconvenience to her in writing, and especially in playing the piano, and before that she had had it in the knee and foot too. So we thought it would be advisable to try a thorough cure for three weeks. Aix-les-Bains in Savoy, not far from Chambéry, is celebrated for baths and douches and also water which is good for rheumatism, and so she left Windsor for there on the 17th with Lord Southampton, Major and Mrs. Edwards and a doctor, and will be back again, if God will, on the 12th or 13th of August. I hear from her daily and the baths seem to be suiting her well. The neighbourhood, which is very mountainous, is said to be very beautiful. Ella has been staying with me, and on the 1st I am expecting Louis with Victoria and Irene. With regard to Victoria's engagement, it is precisely because she is so talented that she should not have made a conventional marriage with some prince who would be called *a good match*, but would otherwise have offered no advantages. The English element in Louis Battenberg attracted her very much, since she is herself so very English.

I hope that Vicky is well again. I have seen several times our dear granddaughter Charlotte and found her very nice and warm-hearted, and she spoke of you very lovingly. William's wife is making a better recovery this time, and the child is said to be healthy and strong. The eldest has grown quite handsome, I hear. The Channel Tunnel will not materialise, which is a very good thing.

The cholera is very bad in Egypt and worries me very much on account of our troops. Up to now, however, they have suffered very little.

Progress with my leg is very slow, but all the same there is a steady improvement, and I sit out of doors a great deal, but I am fearfully tired.

Leopold and his wife and the very dainty little Alice have been here for 2 days ; they are going to Germany on the 2nd and leaving the little one with me.

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

On February 21st, 1884, Queen Victoria wrote in her Journal, "Leopold started for Cannes to stay at the Villa Nevada, Capt. Perceval's little villa there, as he thinks he requires a little change and warmth, but he is going alone, as Helen's health does not allow her to travel just now. I think it rather a pity that he should leave her". While staying at Cannes, Prince Leopold died suddenly, on March 28th, from the breaking of a blood-vessel in his head. He was only thirty-one, recently married, and on the threshold of a useful career in public affairs. When Queen Victoria received the news she was "utterly crushed". As one looks back over the Queen's life story, one is horrified by the number of bereavements she was forced to bear. Cynics often refer to her devotion to mourning, but it is reasonable to say that no woman has ever suffered so many sorrows and, at the same time, sustained a responsibility over which, as Carlyle said at the beginning of her reign, an archangel might tremble. "I am a poor, desolate old woman", she wrote, "and my cup of sorrow overflows ! Oh ! God, in His mercy, spare my other dear children !" She was used to grief by now and it was not true that she ever lost herself in her sorrow, at the expense of the living, except during the first years after Prince Albert's death.

She turned her thoughts at once to Leopold's wife. "That poor, loving young wife", she wrote, "who has been kept on her sofa, more or less since the middle of January, for fear of any accident, how may this news affect her!"

The Prince of Wales hastened to Cannes in order to send his brother's body home to England. Writing to a friend of Prince Leopold, the Prince of Wales said, "I could not bear the thought of his returning home without a relative to look after him in death as they had so often done in life".

The funeral was at St. George's Chapel, because Prince Leopold had wished it so. Two days after, Queen Victoria wrote to the Empress Augusta.

Windsor Castle.

April 8th, 1884.

Dear, beloved Augusta,

I cannot thank you enough for your warm-hearted sympathy on this most grievous and terrible occasion. I am deeply grateful for your three dear letters, as well as for the wreath and for your kindness in sending Count Perponcher. By now you know all the details about the sudden passing of my beloved child. Exactly 4 hours later than my faithful, excellent friend (whom I have missed most painfully just at this very time) was torn from me last year, his beautiful soul has taken flight to where his father and sister have gone before him. I am profoundly shattered and crushed, but all the same I was able to take part in everything, to receive the dear remains at the station and follow them to the Albert Chapel. The cortège, accompanied by Chopin's Funeral March, was very solemn, imposing and yet simple. The services in the Albert Chapel were very beautiful, and the magnificent flowers with the most glorious fragrance of gardenias, tuberoses,

roses, etc., which surrounded the dear coffin and almost covered it, were fairylike ! Fritz can and will describe it all to you. Poor Helen is bearing herself in a way worthy of all admiration, with blessed calm and Christian resignation, with such courage, in spite of her deep, heart-rending grief, thinking only of others. She looks so touching and as though illumined. She attended the afternoon service in the Albert Chapel and went in before it alone with me. On the next morning, the 5th, she again went in alone, and then she remained quietly in the castle during the funeral. This was very beautiful and simple, but very moving, dignified and solemn. He had expressed a wish for a military funeral, and to be buried in St. George's, and also that Chopin's Funeral March should be played !

I have already been 3 times to Claremont, and am going there again on Saturday. On the 15th I am going with Beatrice to Darmstadt for 14 days, *quite privately*, as it is desirable that I should have complete quiet and change of air, and be able to live there in absolute retirement. I am not ill but very exhausted and very sad.

I have sent Vicky 3 photographs, which I can also send you later if you like. I am also enclosing some very good descriptions and articles for you, as well as a pretty memorial-card.

I must close in haste, hoping that the dear Emperor is better.

Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

Queen Victoria's next letter to Prussia was addressed to the Crown Prince, and it reveals her in the full vigour of political conflict. Gladstone had showed himself willing to promise the evacuation of Egypt after three and a half years, and the Queen was opposed to this. She saw that England would be reluctant to withdraw when the time came. Once more she



showed her fine will, which swept little reasons aside. "The Queen will *not* give *her consent* to it", she wrote. "How *often and often* on many questions within the last few years have her warnings been disregarded, and alas! (when too late) justified! Let this not happen again now!"

Balmoral Castle.

June 10th, 1884.

Dear Fritz

I owe you my warmest thanks for the charming little picture as well as for your letter for my old birthday, now become a day of so much sadness, and for two memoranda.

In spite of all my efforts I cannot prevent my Government from committing the grossest acts of folly; for instance, as a result of the Conferences they want to bind themselves to evacuate Egypt in  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years' time, because otherwise the French would not come to any agreement on the financial question! At first they said five years, but the French protested, though they are willing to undertake not to enter Egypt without our permission provided we evacuate it within  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, unless the Great Powers themselves should desire an extension of the time. I said from the beginning "don't bind yourselves to a definite period," for I have too often seen how unwise and dangerous such a promise is. But they paid no attention to my warning. Please keep this to yourself, save for Vicky. . . .

At the end of the year, Queen Victoria wrote to the Empress, thanking her for Christmas presents and sending her New Year greetings.

Osborne.

December 30th, 1884.

Dear Augusta,

Allow me to wish you happiness and blessing for the New Year, and in many others too. God grant that the political

horizon may clear and '85 be peaceful. These last 2 years have been full of mourning and anxiety for me, and I look forward with disquiet to the opening of the new one !

My warm thanks for your pretty presents and your dear letters of the 20th and 27th. Christmas was very sad, as I had foreseen.

I sent you the news of Beatrice's engagement to Henry of Battenberg by telegram. She is very happy, because she has chosen after her own heart, and still will live with me and continue in future to be the same support and great consolation that she has always been.

Lenchen spent 4 days with us here. Helena and the little girl are staying with us. On Jan. 8 Eddie's (Albert Victor's) 21st birthday will be celebrated at Sandringham, when all the members of the family will be present.

I must close, as the post is going, with renewed wishes for your happiness and blessings to you and the Emperor,  
Ever your faithful sister and friend,

V. R.

## CHAPTER XXIV

1887-1888

THERE is an unfortunate gap in the dates of letters preserved at Charlottenburg and we are forced to leap three years, to the spring of 1887, before there is another glimpse of the happy relationship between Queen Victoria and the Empress. In 1885, Princess Beatrice was married at Whippingham Church, twenty-seven years after the marriage of her eldest sister to Prince Frederick of Prussia. The wedding reminded the Queen that she and her contemporaries had come to old age. The year 1887 marked the fiftieth of her reign and it brought the ninetieth birthday of Augusta's husband, the Emperor William I. The Queen was beginning to feel "very tired and exhausted" and she noted that she "fell asleep" in her chair after tea. "A very rare thing for me".

The Prince of Wales went to Berlin for the Emperor's birthday, taking with him a letter from the Queen. It was a time for rejoicing. The Emperor's birthday and the Queen's Jubilee were supplemented by the betrothal of two of their grandchildren, Prince Heinrich of Prussia, and Princess Irene, daughter of the late Princess Alice. The celebration of these events came at the close of Queen Victoria's intimacy with the Prussian Royal Family. In the following year the Emperor died, and his son, the Crown Prince, outlived

him by only a few months. The Empress Augusta retired into the background and died two years later. The Prussian throne passed to William II, the Queen's grandson, with whom she had little in common, although she had been so willing to be fond of him when he was a boy. These changes accentuated the Queen's loneliness.

Buckingham Palace.

March 18th, 1887.

Dear Brother

I cannot allow my son to leave without giving him these lines to bring you my wishes for your happiness and prosperity on the occasion of your goth birthday. Such an age is seldom attained—may God bless and protect you still. It is strange that in the year in which you celebrate your goth birthday I shall reach the 50th anniversary of my accession. And in this year, so important for us both, our grandchildren have become betrothed. I cannot think unmoved of the union of the children of my two dear daughters. Henry should consider himself fortunate to win such a wife as my beloved Irene. You were always so kind, dear Brother, to my never to be forgotten Alice, that I cannot doubt that you will be glad to welcome her daughter as your future granddaughter. She is a most charming girl.

With renewed good wishes

I remain, my dear Brother,

Ever your sincere sister and friend

VICTORIA R. I.

The Jubilee celebrations passed off splendidly. The Queen was refreshed by the widespread acclamations. Old resentments were forgotten as the country realised the true strength of her example and her influence. This faith rejuvenated her and she was able to pass

through the ordeal and still find the energy to sit down and write a full description to the Empress. (The Queen was compared to Elizabeth—but Elizabeth had ruled a little world of five million people. Queen Victoria ruled half the world, almost, and her name was impressed on cities the sites of which had not even been discovered when she came to the throne.) The world came to pay tributes to her. Indian Princes held out their swords for her to touch. The Queen of Hawaii came with a gift of precious feathers. Letsie, Chief of the Basutos, wrote to the Queen, “If I was not old and infirm, I would have liked to go and see her Majesty with my own eyes, as I hear that many Kings and Princes from far countries have done”. (It was true that Queen Victoria was more than the matriarch of the old world;) she was also endowed with almost divine importance in the eyes of chieftains whose sense of monarchy was no less certain for their being black and untutored in European habits. Side by side with this enormous prestige was a deep affection, essentially domestic and simple, among those subjects who lived near to the Queen. (All the contempt which the throne attracted when she was crowned had died and republicanism was no more than a noisy boast among the few. Mellowing with age, the Queen had become a symbol of stability and a focus for all the ramifications of the British Commonwealth. Her reign coincided with the last phase of Imperial expansion. She was the living exponent of a new majesty and conception of monarchy and the public recognition of this was crystallised in the Jubilee celebrations.)

The bunting, the excited faces, the glittering

processions and the cheering crowds in the streets—these were no novelty to London. What was new was the emotion stirred by the Abbey ceremony. It was simply and well described in Lord Rosebery's letter to the Queen. "Few even of those who are not your Majesty's subjects could view unmoved the procession from the Palace to the Abbey with its proud cavalcade of princes, its majestic representation of the sovereignties of the world, and the enthusiastic multitudes that hailed its passage ; but fewer still that touching and magnetic moment in the Abbey when your Majesty appeared alone and aloft—symbolising so truly your Majesty's real position—to bear silent testimony to the blessings and the sorrows which it has pleased God to bestow on your Majesty and your people during two generations. And when later your Majesty passed from the Sovereign to the Mother, the touch of nature which has brought your Majesty into sympathy with the humblest of your subjects added the supreme emotion to a matchless scene".

Messages of congratulation poured in from all over the world, and telegrams came in such numbers that they could not be acknowledged. Queen Victoria found time, however, to write to both the Empress Augusta and to the Emperor, returning thanks for their presents and good wishes. It will be noticed that, for the first time, the Queen expressed anxiety for the Crown Prince, who was suffering from an illness of the throat.

Balmoral Castle.

June 2nd, 1887.

Dear Augusta

Very many thanks for your three kind letters and for your pretty and ingenious present.

We are so rejoiced that our dear good Fritz is so much better than some people believed, and that there is nothing to prevent his coming to the Jubilee. It would have been a great grief to me, as well as to the whole country, which loves and respects him, had it been otherwise.

Thank you for your kind expressions regarding my Jubilee. These fifty years have been a long, and sometimes a difficult time. You speak of "painful changes." Such are, of course, inevitable when one loses many of one's dear ones (mother, husband, children, etc.) as well as friends ; but otherwise, as far as I am concerned, I know of no painful changes !

I am very glad that all our grandchildren, and my great granddaughter and great grandson will be present on the 21st. . . .

Windsor Castle.

June 25th, 1887.

Dear Brother

I send you my most grateful thanks for the good wishes on the occasion of my Jubilee contained in your kind letter of June 14, and for your beautiful present, which will always be a treasured reminder of the day and of your friendship. The celebrations, as you will have heard, went off very well and were worthy of the occasion ; the popular enthusiasm was great and very moving. . . .

As the months passed, the Crown Prince's condition became worse. Dr. Morel Mackenzie (knighted in September for his services) was called into consultation with the German doctors and he encouraged the Crown Princess with his opinion. But his comfort was short-lived for, in November, it was known that the Crown Prince was suffering from cancer. On the 22nd, Queen Victoria recorded in her Journal, " Had two long letters

from dear Vicky, giving a dreadful account of the intrigues going on at Berlin. She is half distracted ”.

Osborne.

August 17th, 1887.

Dear Augusta

. . . I am so rejoiced for you that the long time of suspense and uncertainty here in England has ended by Dr. Mackenzie's holding out a definite prospect of recovery. Thank God ! He regards it merely as a question of time and care : continued adherence to the same treatment and strict avoidance of all risks of taking cold, and of any speech-making ; for the rest, a careful observance of all measures which may strengthen the system. If the necessary sacrifices can be made we may look forward to a perfect recovery by next spring or summer. It will mean a long and difficult trial of patience for you and Fritz, but a short time compared with what most patients suffering from this throat complaint have to endure, and at any rate you will have the consolation of knowing that the future is safe. As long as this was still uncertain it was much more difficult to be patient than now, when we are justified in feeling the highest hope and confidence.

Balmoral Castle.

November 11th, 1887.

Dear Augusta

You will have learnt from my telegram of my deep anxiety about our beloved Fritz, as I realise yours from your reply. How distressing and disturbing this new symptom in the throat is, as well as being so unexpected, just when everything seemed to be going so satisfactorily. Yet we must hope for the best and be patient. But it is a hard trial for dear Fritz and my poor Vicky. . . .

With the renewed assurance of my warm sympathy and the heartfelt hope that we may soon have more reassuring



news of our dearly beloved Fritz, I remain always your true sister and friend

V. R. I.

Osborne.

December 22nd, 1887.

Dear Augusta

Thank you for your dear letters of the 25th November and of the 10th. I hope you are better? The much more favourable news we recently had of dear Fritz cannot fail to have a good effect on your health, for anxiety and fear always have the opposite. You were not in Berlin at the time, otherwise I am sure you would have put a stop to the pessimistic reports which were so unwisely (to my mind) spread abroad. At the worst it was only a question of temporary danger, and I think one should never say, as unfortunately it was said, that the patient is dying until the very end. One should not conceal the gravity of the case, but one should never for an instant give up hope. If God wills (and unberufen) we have every reason to hope that the throat complaint is not so dangerous as was feared. . . .

On March 7th, 1888, the aged Emperor of Germany passed away. The Prince of Wales, abandoning the celebration of his silver wedding, travelled to Berlin for the funeral. The Crown Prince had improved a little from the sad state of the previous year and he hurried back from San Remo, but when he arrived in Berlin he was too ill to attend the ceremony. He was able to see the Prince of Wales, privately, but he was then so ill that he could not speak and he had to answer the Prince's questions with a pencil and paper. It was a poignant occasion for the royal brothers-in-law who had looked forward with such high hopes to the opportunities

that would come to them with Prince Frederick's accession. They had cherished the thought of a closer understanding between Germany and England ; now it was too late. The Prince of Wales returned to England in sorrow, to report to his mother. The Queen wrote : " Bertie arrived just at two, very sad at the state of beloved Fritz, and gave me a report written by Sir M. Mackenzie, who is now much alarmed. Bertie said that Fritz did not look ill, but was much thinner. He had, however, a hunted, anxious expression, which was very distressing to see ".

Queen Victoria telegraphed to the Empress Augusta as soon as she heard of the Emperor's death, and next day she wrote to her.

Buckingham Palace.

March 10th, 1888.

My very dear Augusta,

It needs no fresh words from me to assure you of my heartfelt sympathy and of my sincere esteem and friendship for the beloved Emperor. I have had the happiness of knowing him ever since 1844, and he was always unfailingly kind to me and my children, as well as to my dear husband. For you, dear Augusta, this is indeed a heavy, an overwhelming blow. The whole German people will grieve for the loss of the beloved and heroic father of his country. May God strengthen and help you to bear this sorrow. Poor Louise is greatly to be pitied in losing her adored father so soon after her dear son.

The long journey from San Remo to Berlin is a hazardous undertaking. God grant that dear Fritz may not suffer ! Thank heaven the latest reports are so much better.

A thousand thanks for the kind letter that Prince Radziwill brought me the day before yesterday.

Once more with warmest sympathy from myself and my

children, I remain, Your true and affectionate sister and friend,

V. R. I.

Queen Victoria visited Berlin in the following month to see her daughter, now the Empress Frederick. The Empress met her at the station and took her to the palace and then to the Emperor's bedroom. He was lying in bed and when he saw the Queen, he raised both his hands with pleasure and handed her a nosegay. Afterwards, the Queen and her daughter sat and talked. "She is very sad", wrote the Queen, "and cried a good deal, poor dear. Besides her cruel anxiety about dear Fritz, she had so many worries and unpleasantnesses".

It was indeed true. There were some who were already saying that "an Emperor who could not talk was unfit to reign" and attempts were being made to force a Regent upon him. The person named was his son, Prince William. While she guarded her husband's position, the Empress was obliged to suffer from the estrangement which existed between her and her son. He did not hide his wishes or his resentment. While she was in Berlin, Queen Victoria went also to see Augusta and found her "quite crumpled up and deathly pale, really rather a ghastly sight". Her voice was so weak that it was barely audible. One of her hands was paralysed and the other shook. The Queen's other important interview was with Bismarck, whom she met for the first time. It was a dramatic meeting and enough to reveal them both in their true strength. The talk turned naturally to the Emperor's sad condition and Queen Victoria drew from Bismarck an assurance

that there would be no Regency and that he would support the Empress. When Bismarck withdrew, he was observed to wipe the sweat from his forehead and remark, in admiration, "What a woman! One could do business with her!"

Queen Victoria left Berlin next day, parting from her daughter in great anxiety. "Dear Vicky came into the railway carriage", she wrote, "and I kissed her again and again. She struggled hard not to give way, but finally broke down, and it was terrible to see her standing there in tears, while the train moved slowly off, and to think of all she was suffering and might have to go through. My poor, poor child, what would I not do to help her in her hard lot!"

The Queen's visit to Berlin had helped every aspect of the situation. One can only guess at the power with which she was now able to wrestle with affairs, but one knows, with certainty, that the power was there. She had impressed and convinced Bismarck and she had calmed the anxious members of the Royal family. According to Sir Edward Malet, the British Ambassador in Berlin, the result of the Queen's visit was that "the evil spirits of contention and slander have had to shrink away for the time being".

The Queen's Journal shows the anxiety with which she watched the affairs of Germany after her return from Berlin. On May 19th, she noted, "Very good accounts of beloved Fritz. He is gaining strength daily, and was out in the park for six hours yesterday. It is a wonderful improvement, if only it can last".

A few days later, the Queen "heard that dear Fritz" continued "to improve" and that he had "been for a

little drive in the Thiergarten, where he has been received with extraordinary enthusiasm". There were hopes that the Emperor might live for a year and that he might even recover, but early in June it was apparent that his end was near. On the 15th, Queen Victoria received news of his death and once more she was bowed down with grief. She had watched the career of her son-in-law, from boyhood, with loving interest. The happiness of married life at Balmoral had all been linked with his early visits, his betrothal and his marriage. The years since then had been enlivened by the hopes of what would come when he began to reign. Now all was over and the hopes of the young Empress were also extinguished. The moment of power, for which Prince Albert had trained her, had died as soon as it came. With the death of the Emperor, the old regime ended. The young Prince William, firm in his own conception of monarchy, firm in his decision to act alone, without Prince Bismarck, guided German thought into new channels and the hopes of friendship between Germany and England slowly died under the shadow of his policy. Queen Victoria telegraphed twice to him, appealing to him to show some kindness to his mother, and later she wrote what was to be the last extant letter to the Dowager Empress Augusta, her old friend.

Windsor Castle.

June 22nd, 1888.

Dear Augusta,

The tragedy is too appalling for me to find words to express my feelings. Dear, darling Fritz, how I loved him, and how he loved me ! It is too hard that you should have

to go through this also. How proud and thankful you must be to have had such a son ! The tragedy for my poor child is too ghastly—much worse even than mine in 1861. I pray that William may strive to follow his father's great example and that God may help him. I cannot write more—my heart is too heavy and I am too overcome. Please give my deep sympathy to Louise in her terrible loss. God be with you.

Ever your true and sorrowful sister and friend,

V. I. R. [*sic*]

## CHAPTER XXV

1889

THE Prince and Princess of Wales travelled to Berlin for the funeral of the Emperor Frederick, and the changes they found in the life of the court must have alarmed them. The Empress Frederick was virtually shut up at Potsdam and she had become the target for the ill temper of her son. There was every sign of the wide gulf which was to exist early in the coming century, when the German Emperor and his English uncle were to find it impossible to maintain even the phrases of polite intercourse. The new Emperor did not restrain his dislike for the Prince of Wales, which was openly proved over the Vienna incident, when the Emperor refused to visit the Austrian capital at the same time as the Prince. In October of 1888, Queen Victoria had described her grandson's behaviour as "too *vulgar* and too absurd". When the Prince of Wales had to suffer a public affront from the Emperor, she turned all the strength of her loyalty upon her son. Their opportunity to retaliate came early in 1889, when the Emperor expressed his wish to visit England. The Queen wrote to Lord Salisbury that the Emperor "must make some sort of apology, before he comes, to the Prince of Wales", and to her son she wrote, "William must *not* come *this* year; *you* could not meet him, and I could *not* after all he

has said and done". The Emperor had to wait until the summer for the forgiveness and indulgence of his grandmother, who allowed him to visit her at Osborne in the hope, as Lord Salisbury said, that he had "awakened from the temporary intoxication of the summer".

There was one letter in which the Queen expressed her view of the Vienna incident and the explanation which followed.

Windsor Castle.

May 25th, 1889.

My dear Willy,

I must write you a few lines about your visit to me at Osborne in August. I am told by the Officers of the Admiralty that on the 2nd of August the tide will not be right for the entry of your squadron into the Solent, but that on Saturday the 3rd it will do very well. I hope therefore that that day will suit you and that the weather may be as fine as it is now.

I was very glad to hear from Uncle Christian that you utterly deny the assertion of your having expressed to the Emperor of Austria a wish not to meet Uncle Bertie at Vienna. Lord Salisbury reports to me that you have also instructed Count Hatzfeldt to repeat to him that you never expressed any such wish, and I will tell this to your Uncle who will be much pleased to hear it. I cannot understand how the mistake could have arisen; it might really have led to very serious consequences, and I hope you will inquire into the circumstances.

VICTORIA.

The antagonism between the Emperor and the Prince of Wales had one good effect. It drew the Queen closer to her son and in the twenty years of life re-



maining, her confidence in his judgment slowly increased.

In 1890 the Empress Augusta died. The friendship which had been rooted in mutual confidence and strengthened by so many hopes in their children—hopes which had come to nothing, was at an end. Queen Victoria's record of her emotions at this time is incomplete. One feels that somewhere else there must be a letter in which she wrote more revealingly of her feeling at the loss of her friend. In her Journal she recalled the length of their friendship. "For forty-four years we had been on intimate terms. How happy it always made her to come to England". Thus the company of the Queen's friends became fewer as she embarked on the last decade of her life. But a strange change came with these later bereavements, and instead of turning anxiously to thoughts of her own death, and bemoaning the trials of life, the Queen suddenly wrote with a healthy desire to live on and to enjoy life. Twenty-nine years before she wrote, "The things of this world are of no interest to the Queen . . . *her thoughts are fixed above*". Now came signs of happiness, and a definite wish to go on living. "May God enable me to become worthier, less full of weaknesses and failings, and may He preserve me yet for some years!"

Some miracle of new strength and purpose seemed to help the Queen to recover from her own melancholy history. Death after death had darkened her life; bereavement, sorrow and disappointment.) Yet one finds a sudden refreshment of spirit and an appetite for gaiety, which expressed itself in her court. In

October of 1890 she was at Balmoral. After dinner, she wrote in her Journal, they had "pushed the furniture back, and had a nice little impromptu dance". She danced in a quadrille with her grandson and wrote, "I did quite well". Then followed "some waltzes and polkas". There were theatrical companies at Windsor and when *The Gondoliers* was produced in the Waterloo Chamber, she was delighted. The comedian was "most absurd" and the "clever little actress" Jessie Bond sang "quite nicely". Paderewski, "pale, with a sort of aureole of gold hair", went to Windsor to play for her. Melba sang for her, and the de Reskes. The buoyancy of these months never entirely left the Queen to the end of her life. (In 1892 the Duke of Clarence died. In the same year, Gladstone came back into power and he was once more speaking in the House of Commons, "with a vigour and animation most remarkable in a man of eighty-two".) This return of the Liberal veteran had a different effect on the Queen from his previous victories. She had more poise in dealing with what she described as the "very *alarming look-out*", and when Lord Salisbury's resignation was placed in her hands, and she was obliged to invite Mr. Gladstone to form a Ministry, she did not become stubborn or unreasonable.) She wrote to him, and she said all in the closing sentence of her letter. "The Queen need scarcely add that she trusts that Mr. Gladstone and his friends will continue to maintain and promote the honour and welfare of her great Empire".

(Almost every figure of her early life had passed from Queen Victoria's circle. In Germany her eldest

daughter lived in anxiety and unhappiness, and Queen Victoria was unable to exercise the influence which had been so much easier in the frank letters which she used to write to her friend Augusta, and to each of three Kings and Emperors, in turn. This field of pleasure and influence was closed to her. Lord Salisbury remained, and the ever menacing Mr. Gladstone. But she did not write so often now of the dreadful loneliness of being old. She had learned to accept young ideas and innovations with broader sympathy and understanding. When Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain came to dine, in March of 1894, the old complaint against Mr. Chamberlain in 1883, because of his "dangerous and improper language" was forgotten. Now he was "very agreeable" and Mrs. Chamberlain "looked lovely, and was as charming as ever".

There was no abatement of troubles in these closing years of the Queen's life. The opening of the Kiel Canal in June of 1894 had shown the way of the German Emperor's ambitions. There was war between China and Japan in 1894 and 1895 and the relations between Russia and Britain had been once more strained. Fresh Armenian massacres brought Abdul Hamid into disfavour again, there was friction with America over the boundary between the South American Republic of Venezuela and British Guiana, and in South Africa Kruger had celebrated the Emperor William's birthday by pleading for deeper friendship between Germany and the Transvaal.

These problems, spread over a few years, all came before the Queen and each one urged her to write and

enquire, with her energetic persistence. Her eyes were failing, so that her secretary had to write his notes for her with special broad nibs, and it was no longer easy for her to walk. Yet her will and spirit overcame her physical ills and she seldom allowed herself to rest. "She contributed force and decision to every cause and, in the last five years of her life, lame, tired and barely able to read, she almost guided the world. Those who refused her guidance were at least intimidated by her will".

(Queen Victoria's reign ended under the anxieties of war. In the closing years she seemed to correct every mistake of judgment she had made when she was younger.) Mellowness perhaps helped her to see the agitations of life more placidly, for there was less indignation, but there was never less power. Her letters to her heir were no longer blunt and unsympathetic. When her Diamond Jubilee came, in June of 1897, the Queen's will and spirit were in complete unison. The records of the celebrations which she wrote in her Journal, are the most human, calm and graceful prose she ever wrote. She wrote in March of 1899, we read, "All fall around me. I become more and more lonely". Bismarck and Gladstone had left the world by then, so that she was bereft of enemies as well as friends. But the Queen was no longer submerged by loneliness. She rode the last wave gallantly and without complaint. New faces had come into her world and she was able to accept them and understand the radical and unhampered trend of the talk to which she listened. Every incident of these closing years showed the crystal-clear character which had sustained

her, through error as well as success. She enjoyed Kitchener's victory when the British and Egyptian flags were hoisted on the walls of Khartoum. Gordon was avenged, and she used the word "avenged" in her Journal with grim satisfaction. The year 1899 came. In October, Britain's intentions in the Transvaal were no longer to be doubted. Lord Wolseley announced to the Queen that there would be "70,000 men of Your Majesty's Army, the largest number *ever* sent from the United Kingdom for any war", prepared to fight in her name in South Africa. Thus the war began, and continued after her death. If there is any force in heredity, it must be true that there is fearlessness in the blood of Princes. Through all the months that lay before her the Queen met the affronts and anxieties and tolls of battle with royal courage. She was an old woman, but she never stooped to sentimentality, nor did she relax the iron will needed in the monarch of a country at war. The Queen undid the harm of years when she crossed to Ireland to thank the soldiers for their valour. It would need one of Mr. Housman's plays to illustrate the drama of the decision to which she came after forty years of prejudice and resentment. It is only upon a stage that one could fully present the figure of this old sovereign admitting her "possible idea . . ." that she should "go to Ireland". She went. She was wheeled on to her yacht and she drove through the streets of Dublin with silver shamrocks embroidered upon her bonnet and her parasol and with a bunch of *real* shamrocks pinned in her black dress. Her error was royally atoned for.

The links with the Queen's old life became fewer and

fewer. Her daughter died in Germany and with her all the Queen's affection for the changing country. A new century had begun and it moved at a pace which was strange to her. She died at the time when her own concept of foreign politics, royal prerogative and domestic life was passing away. On the evening of January 22nd, 1901, Queen Victoria died. The last words she dictated for her Journal were of the work she had done during the day. "Did some signing, and dictated to Lenchen". The last word she spoke coherently was the name of her son. She murmured *Bertie* to her heir, who was at her side.)

So the Victorian century ended. It allowed one lonely ghost to live on. The ex-Empress Eugénie survived until the events of her life were written of in the history books. She lived to see France victorious in 1918 and to learn that William II had fallen, as her own husband had fallen, and been banished. She lived long enough to wonder if the England she knew when she came as an exile and England as it was at her death could possibly belong to the same world and bear the same name.

# INDEX

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# INDEX

- ABERDEEN**, George, fifth Earl of, 41  
**Albert**, Prince Consort, 20, 23, 26, 36, 46, 65, 68, 91, 98, 167, 186; courtship and marriage, 1-3; early difficulties, 2-4; visits Germany, 6-7; visits Louis Philippe, 13; his interest in the drama, 14-5; his great talents, 21; responsible for Great Exhibition of 1851, 21, 24-5; his anxiety regarding England's defences, 27, 38; his good judgment, 27, 42, 44, 120, 139; and religious persecution, 31; Press attacks on, 39-41; his attitude to Prussia, 42-4, 134, 148, 162; visits France, 48, 50; upbringing of his children, 48-9, 67, 153; his love for the Princess Royal, 57, 97, 100, 102; and Princess Royal's marriage to Prince Frederick of Prussia, 58, 66; his love of the country, 77-8; created Prince Consort, 81-5; his affection for the Empress Eugénie, 86-7, 154; visits Germany, 101-2; his grief at the death of the Duchess of Kent, 117-8; his death, 120-30, 138-40, 154-5, 166; his speeches and addresses published, 130; his affection for Princess Augusta, 134, 136; his "Life" by Sir Theodore Martin, 166, 204-5, 189, 218, 222  
**Albert Victor**, Duke of Clarence, 258, 274  
**Albert Memorial**, 21  
**Aldershot Pavilion**, Queen Victoria's letter from, 227  
**Alexander II**, Czar of Russia, 87, 197, 209-10, 243  
**Alexander III**, Czar of Russia, 244  
**Alexandra**, Queen, 131-3, 147, 149, 158, 176, 187, 197  
**Alexandrine of Coburg**, Princess, 88-90, 213  
**Alfred**, Duke of Edinburgh (Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha), 29, 49, 67, 86, 134, 150, 197-8, 200-2  
**Alfred of Edinburgh**, Prince, 201-2  
**Alice**, Princess (Duchess of Hesse), 63-4, 99, 112-3, 127-8, 171, 175, 181, 207-8, 210, 231-3, 259  
**Arabi Pasha**, 247  
**Argyll**, John Campbell, Duke of, 176-7, 218  
**Arthur**, Duke of Connaught, 20, 39, 55, 64, 202, 213, 220, 225, 234, 242, 247, 250  
**Atholl**, Louise, Duchess of, 158  
**August**, Victoria, Empress of William II of Germany, 240-1, 249  
**Augusta**, Empress of William I of Germany, her letters from Queen Victoria, *see* Victoria  
**Austro-Prussian War**, 160-3  
**BALMORAL Castle**, Queen Victoria's letters written from, 31, 70, 72, 74, 77, 88, 93, 126, 145, 151, 154, 157, 174-7, 179, 196, 199, 201, 210, 216, 217, 224, 229, 239, 240, 257, 262, 264  
**Beaconsfield**, Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of, 207-8, 216; Prime Minister, 120, his genius in dealing with the Queen, 165-6, 204; corresponds with the Queen, 207; attends dinner party at Windsor (1877), 220; and dispute between Russia and Turkey, 221-3; attends Congress at Berlin, 230-1; and Prince Imperial, 237; his last Premiership, 241; his defeat, 242-3; his death, 244-5  
**Beatrice**, Princess (Princess Henry of Battenberg), 89, 135, 192, 205-6, 208, 211, 213, 224, 246-7, 252-3, 258-9  
**Bernard of Saxe-Meiningen**, Prince, 223  
**Bernstorff**, Count, 195-6  
**Bill**, Reform, 65, 66  
**Bill**, Regency, 3, 81  
**Bismarck**, Prince von, 116, 217, 240, 276; opposed by Prince Frederick, 17, 142, 229-30; and Russian Alliance, 43, 52; his hostility to the Princess Royal, 97, 195; disapproves of marriage of Prince of Wales, 132, 147; his "blood and iron" control, 134, 140; his ambitions, 158-60; and the Franco-Prussian War, 170-1; conflict between Catholics and, 197;

- war rumours, 208-9, 212; interview with the Prince of Wales, 249; meets Queen Victoria, 267-8; William II, attitude towards, 269
- Bloomfield, John Douglas, second Lord, 94-5
- Blücher, Prince von, 32-3, 130
- Blücher, Countess, 89, 191
- Bonin, General von, 44, 46*n.*, 116
- Brandis, Dr., 135
- Brown, John, 246, 250-1
- Bruce, Lady A., 129
- Buckingham Palace, Queen Victoria's letters from, 31, 70, 72, 74, 77, 88, 93, 126, 145, 151, 154, 157, 174-7, 179, 190, 199, 201, 210, 216, 217, 224, 229, 239, 240, 257, 262, 264
- Bunsen, Baroness, 5
- Bunsen, Chevalier, 15, 28, 35, 45, 52, 113
- Burgoyne, Sir John, 178
- CAIRD, Rev. W., 90
- Campbell, Sir Colin, 88
- Canning, Sir Stratford, 13
- Carlyle, Thomas, 254
- Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. Joseph, 275
- Chamberlain, Mrs. Joseph, 275
- Charlotte of Belgium, Princess (Arch-duchess Maximilian), 85, 88, 90-7
- Charlotte of Saxe-Meiningen, Princess, 223-4, 236
- Christian IX of Denmark, 147*n.*
- Christian of Schleswig - Holstein, Prince, 156-7
- Clarendon, George Villiers, fourth Earl of, 53
- Clark, Sir James, 74, 76
- Clewton, Lord, 51
- Cobden, Richard, 62
- Coburg, Queen Victoria's letter from, 213
- Cornelius, Peter, 8
- Cowper, Sir G., 91
- Crimean War, 42-61, 178, 215
- DERBY, Edward Stanley, fifteenth Earl of, 84
- Deutz, Hotel de Belleville, Queen Victoria's letter from, 103
- Dilke, Sir Charles, 185-6
- Dunmore, Charles Murray, seventh Earl of, 220-2
- EDWARD VII, 47, 55, 153, 214, 217; his birth and christening, 4-6, 8; his relations with his father, 57; his sister, Princess Royal's engagement, 64; goes abroad, 87, 89, 123, 259; his marriage, 128, 131-4, 147, 152, 158; his anti-Prussian feelings, 149, 176, 178; his serious illness, 185-8; his attitude towards Russia, 197; visits India, 220; attends family weddings in Germany, 223, 249; his sister's death (Princess Alice), 232; his view's on Prince Imperial's death, 237-8; and the Queen and Mr. Gladstone, 242; his brother's death (Prince Leopold), 255; attends funeral of Emperor William I, 265-6; attends funeral of Emperor Frederick, 271; antagonism between Emperor William II and, 272; on better terms with the Queen, 272-3; succeeds to the Throne, 278
- Elizabeth, Queen, 261
- Elizabeth, Queen of Frederick William IV of Prussia, 5, 8, 10, 20, 62, 72, 94, 106, 114, 199
- Ely, Caroline, Marchioness of, 194, 200, 224-5
- Ernst, Duke of Saxe-Coburg (Prince Consort's father), 6, 49
- Ernst, Duke of Saxe-Coburg (Prince Consort's brother), 37, 184, 213
- Ernst, King of Hanover, 26, 82
- Erroll, Eliza, Countess of, 196
- Eugene, Prince Louis (Prince Imperial), 183, 191-3, 237-9
- Eugénie, Empress, 34-5, 54-6, 85-7, 154, 175-6, 178, 180-1, 191-4, 237-9, 278
- FEODORA, Princess (Queen Victoria's half-sister), 49, 50, 78-9, 172, 190-1, 240
- Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria, 108, 139, 141
- Franco-Prussian War, 11, 170-8
- Frederick III, German Emperor, 30, 35, 114, 213, 221, 223, 256-7; his betrothal and marriage to the Princess Royal, 1, 4, 16, 22-3, 57-69, 79, 80, 88, 94-100, 118, 259; Queen Victoria's affection and esteem for, 16-18, 24-5, 66, 68, 100, 132, 142, 162, 269; visits England, 57, 66-8, 79, 80, 145-7, 166-8, 228, 234-6; attends opening ceremony of "Great Exhibition" (1862), 123-6; his revolt against Bismarck, 142-4; death of his infant son, 160-1; his part in

- the Franco-Prussian War, 171-3, 181-3; denies possibility of war (1875), 209-10; his fatal illness, 262-8; succeeds to the Throne, 265; his death, 269-71
- Frederick William IV, King of Prussia, 35; godfather to Prince of Wales, 6-10; attempted assassination of, 19-21; attends funeral of King of Hanover, 27-8; opposes religious persecution, 30-1; statesmanlike discussions with Queen Victoria, 32-3; Crimean War policy, 42-6, 51-3, 56; the Neuenberg dispute, 69-73; and Prince Consort's status, 92-4; his mind becomes feeble, 102, 106-8; his death, 114-6
- Frederick VII, King of Denmark, 147*n*.
- Freiligrath, Ferdinand, his *Hurra Germania*, 173
- Friedrich of Augustenberg, Prince, 147*n*.
- Fritz of Baden, Prince, 66-7, 73
- Frogmore, Queen Victoria's letter from, 160
- GAINSBOROUGH, Ida, Countess of, 196
- Geffcken, Dr., 199
- George III of England, xiii, 177
- George IV of England, 196
- George VI of England, xiv
- George V, King of Hanover, 26-7, 37, 168, 196, 200
- George, Duke of Cambridge, 58
- Gladstone, Rt. Hon. W. E., 221, 241-4, 256, 274, 276
- Goltz, Count, 103
- Gortschakow, Prince, 209
- Granville, Granville Leveson-Gower, second Earl, 243
- Great Exhibition, The (1851), 17, 21, 135; (1862) 122-6
- Greville, Charles Cavendish, 26, 204-5
- HAMID, ABDUL, 275
- Hardinge, Charles Stewart, second Viscount, 31-2
- Hare, Sir John, 14
- Hawkins, Mr. Desmond, xi
- Haynau, General, 32
- Heinrich of Prussia, Prince, 223-4, 259-60
- Helen, Duchess of Albany, 252, 254-6
- Helena, Princess (Princess Christian), 87, 136, 156-8, 208, 258, 278
- Helps, W. A., publishes Prince Consort's speeches and addresses, 130
- Henckel, Graf, 46
- Henry of Battenberg, Prince, 259
- Hossauer, Herr, 8
- Housman, Mr. Laurence, xiii, 277
- IRENE OF PRUSSIA, Princess, 257-60
- JAGOW, Dr. Kurt, xi
- Jenner, Sir William, 186, 231
- KARL, Prince Friedrich, 225, 234-6
- Karl, Princess Friedrich, 225
- Kitchener of Khartoum, Lord, 277
- Kruger, President, 275
- LEHZEN, Baroness, 102
- Leopold I, King of the Belgians, 6, 18, 25, 29, 34, 37, 45, 62, 66, 85, 90, 96-7, 104, 110-1, 117, 128
- Leopold II of Tuscany, Grand Duke, 31
- Leopold, Duke of Albany, Prince, 37, 63, 175, 197, 199, 205-7, 208, 214, 219, 222, 224-5, 250, 252, 254-5
- Leopold of Hohenzollern, Prince, 103, 170
- Letsie, Chief of the Basutos, 261
- Libernau, Herr von, 224
- Lindsay, Colonel, 224
- Londesborough, Wm. Denison, first Earl of, 187
- Louis XIV, Grand Duke of Hesse, 112, 127, 207-8, 210, 218, 231-2
- Louis-Philippe, King of the French, 10, 13
- Louise of the Netherlands, Princess, 181*n*.
- Louise of Prussia, Princess (Duchess of Baden) (Wiwy), 22, 35, 37-9, 47-8, 59, 64, 66, 69, 73-5, 85, 87-90, 97, 113, 118, 229-30, 266
- Louise, Queen of the Belgians, 29
- Louise, Princess (Duchess of Argyll), 64, 176-7
- Luise, Duchess of Connaught, 225-8, 234-6, 250
- MACKENZIE, Sir Morell, 263-4, 266
- MacMahon, Marshal, 176
- Malet, Sir Edward, 268
- Marie, Empress of Russia, 202, 244
- Marie, Duchess of Edinburgh, 197-202, 209
- Marie of Hesse-Darmstadt, Princess 231

- Marie-Amelie, Queen of Louis-Philippe, 10, 13, 56, 105  
 Marochetti, 130  
 Martin, Sir Theodore, his *Life of the Prince Consort*, 166, 204-5, 218-9, 222  
 Marx, Karl, 10  
 Mary, Duchess of Gloucester, 64-5  
 Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Duke and Duchess of, 82  
 Melba, 274  
 Mensdorff, Prince Alexander, 103  
 Mensdorff, Count, 213  
 Metternich, Prince, 87, 89  
 Moltke, Count von, 210, 211, 212  
 Morley, John, Lord, 241  
 Munster, Count, 195-6, 200  
 NAPOLEON III, 68, 237; his marriage, 18-9, 34-5; affairs in France, 26-7; re-enters Paris as Napoleon III, 32; Russia and France, 42; visits Queen Victoria with the Empress, 54-6, 85-7; and Prince Consort's status, 82; receives Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at Cherbourg, 101-2; Austria v. France, 108; annexes Nice and Savoy, 111; interviews Prince Regent of Prussia, 111-2; his demands for Luxembourg, 163; Franco-Prussian War, 170; his downfall, 170, 178; taken prisoner, 174-6; illness and death in England, 191-4  
 Napoleon, Prince Louis (Plon-Plon), 193  
 National Gallery, 21  
 Nicholas I, Czar of Russia, 30, 42, 52, 178  
 Nightingale, Florence, 74-6  
 Nostitz, Graf, 33  
 OLGA OF WÜRTTEMBERG, Queen, 222  
 Osborne, Queen Victoria's letters from, 7, 20, 29, 33, 47, 48, 85, 106, 110, 115, 118, 121, 124, 133, 136, 138, 152, 161, 165, 167-9, 171-2, 182-3, 189, 192, 194-5, 198, 206-7, 221, 223, 244, 246, 251-2, 257, 264-5  
 PADEREWSKI, 274  
 Palmerston, Henry Temple, Viscount, 26-8, 30, 38, 57, 109, 156-8  
 Perceval, Captain, 254  
 Perponcher, Count, 255  
 Phipps, Sir C., 140  
 Ponsonby, Sir Henry, 243  
 Pourtalès, Graf, 71-3  
 Procter, Adelaide Anne, 190-1  
 RACHAL, 14  
 Racine, Jean, 35  
 Radziwill, Prince, 266  
 Raglan, Henry Fitzroy, second Lord, 51  
 Ristori, Adelaide, 68  
 Rosebery, Archibald Primrose, fifth Earl of, 262  
 Rowton, Lowry Corry, Lord, 245  
 Russell, Lord John, 26, 41, 109  
 Russell, Lord Odo, 179-80, 182, 209  
 ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, 129, 131, 234-5, 255-6  
 Schleinitz, Graf, 235  
 Schleswig-Holstein dispute, The, 146-54  
 Seckendorff, Count, 184  
 Sefolge, Max Joseph, 19  
 Stanley, Lady Augusta, 117  
 Stanley, Dean, 129, 224  
 Stanley, John, Lord, 160  
 Stockmar, Christian, Baron von, 24-5, 47, 64, 90, 136, 139-40, 189  
 Stockmar, Ernst von, *Memoirs*, 189-90  
 Strachey, Lytton, his *Queen Victoria*, xii, xiii  
 Suffield, Charles Harbord, fifth Lord, 234, 237  
 TENNYSON, Lord, 190-1  
*Times, The*, 36, 58, 235  
 Treaty of Berlin, 215-6  
 Treaty of London, 163n.  
 Treaty of Paris, 180n.  
 USEDON, Herr von, 52-3  
 VICTORIA, Queen, her betrothal and marriage, 1-3; and Princess Royal's marriage, 1, 22-4, 57-67, 80-1, 89, 94-100; her characteristics, 3, 141; formulates the Regency Bill, 3, 4; Prince of Wales's birth, 4-9; her first visit to Germany, 6, 7; her cordial relationship with the Prussian Court, 8; receives Louis-Philippe and his Queen, 9-13; Court entertainments, 13-15, 30, 274-5; great friendship between Queen Augusta and, 16-7, 28-9, 33, 34, 96, 110-1, 188; attempted assassinations on, 19, 20, 245-7; attends the Great Exhibition (1851), 21-2, 25, 33-4, 119; visited by her friend Augusta,

23, 37, 69, 135-6, 188-9; her dislike for Lord Palmerston, 26-8, 30, 156-7; her deference to Prince Albert's judgment, 27, 42, 44, 120, 139, 152; chat about her children, 29, 39, 49, 50, 63-5, 89, 207-8, 210; her protest against religious persecution, 30-1; her desire for a strong Prussia, 32-4, 42, 115, 134, 148, 162, 179; her children's private theatricals, 35, 48; fire at Windsor Castle, 36-7; birth of Prince Leopold, 37-8; and Press attacks on Prince Consort, 40-1; and Crimean War, 42-8, 51; her great devotion to her husband, 48, 50-4, 110-1, 120, 125, 131; visit from Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie described, 54-7, 85-7; attends Review at Aldershot, 69; and Neuenberg dispute, 69-73; her relations with her children, 73-6, 88, 127; meets Florence Nightingale, 75-6; her love for Scotland and the country, 77-8, 87-8, 110; her half-brother's death, 79, 80; creates Prince Albert Prince Consort, 81-5; The Indian Mutiny, 90-1; and Sunday observance, 94-6; again visits Germany, 101-4; birth of her first grandchild, 104-5; and King of Prussia's health, 106-7; first letter to Regent Prince William on Italian question, 108-10; her alarm at French pretensions, 111-2; her approval at engagement of Princess Alice, 112-3; her many bereavements, 114, 117, 120, 127, 136-9, 160-2, 185, 190, 231-2, 236, 254, 269, 273-4; and attempted assassination of King William, 118-9; her undying grief at the death of Prince Consort, 120-30, 136-7, 140, 145, 153-5; requests Prince Frederick to open (1862) Exhibition, 123-5; and marriage of the Prince of Wales, 131-3; anxiety regarding the conflict in Prussia, 134-5; her premonitions of an early death, 137-8; journeys to Coburg, 138, 212-3; her intervention at the Austro-Prussian situation, 139-47, 158-60; and Schleswig-Holstein dispute, 147-8, 176-7; her greatness in the cause of peace, 149-52, 162-4, 211;

visited by her grandson, Prince William, 152-3; betrothal of Princess Helena, 156-8; and Bismarck's policy, 158-60, 179; her admiration and affection for Disraeli, 165-6, 207, 230-1, 243-5; commissions biography of the Prince Consort, 166, 189, 204-5, 218, 222; visit from Crown Princess Frederick, 166-68; and Hanoverian Crown property, 168-9; her sympathies in Franco-Prussian War, 170-6, 178-84; her daughter Princess Louise's engagement, 176-7; receives the Empress Eugénie, 178, 181, 192-4; antipathy between Germany and England, 179-84; her temporary unpopularity, 185-6; her anxiety during the illness of the Prince of Wales, 185-8; her indignation with regard to Baron Stockmar's Memoirs, 189-90; death of her half-sister Princess Feodora, 190-1; on Count Münster's appointment as Ambassador, 195-6; Prince Leopold's health causes her anxiety, 197, 199, 205-7, 219, 224-5; marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh, 197-8, 200; christening and confirmation of her grandchildren, 201-3; and Greville's diary, 204; her dependence on Princess Beatrice, 205-6, 253; disturbed by German war rumours, 208-12; Eastern question reopened, 215-8, 221-3; proclaimed Empress of India, 220; visited by Prince William and Prince Heinrich, 223-4; marriage of the Duke of Connaught, 225-8, 234-6; her concern at attacks on German Emperor's life, 227-30; the Berlin Congress, 230-1; death of Princess Alice, 231-3; Prince Imperial's death during Zulu war, 237-9; her many descendants, 240, 252; her grandson William's marriage, 240-1, 249; opens Parliament (1880), 241; receives Mr. Gladstone, 242, 274; bids farewell to Lord Beaconsfield, 243; Alexander II of Russia assassinated, 243-4; her grief at death of Lord Beaconsfield, 244-5; success of her troops in Egypt, 247-8; her

- affection for her servant, John Brown, 250-1; a slight accident, 250-4; death of Prince Leopold, 254-6; political conflict, 256-7; engagement and marriage of Princess Beatrice 258-9; her Jubilee, 260-3; her anxiety regarding Crown Prince Frederick's health, 263-9; health of Emperor William I, 265; Bismarck's admiration for, 269; death of the Emperor Frederick, 269-70; her indignation at behaviour of William II, 271-2; death of her friend the Empress Augusta, 273; receives Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain, 275; international troubles, 275; her closing years, 275-8; her gallant outlook, 276-8; her death, 278; her letters, written to Augusta, Queen of William I, German Emperor, 18, 20-5, 29, 30, 34-41, 45-52, 54-6, 58-60, 63-9, 74-81, 84-91, 93-9, 101, 104-7, 110-3, 117-9, 126-30, 133-6, 139-40, 145, 152-5, 157-62, 165-6, 171-7, 179-83, 187-91, 193-6, 198-202, 205-10, 212-4, 216-27, 229-33, 235-6, 239-41, 243-7, 251-8, 262-7, 269-70; to Frederick III, German Emperor, 257; to Frederick William IV, 5, 7-10, 12-3, 15, 20, 27-8, 31-3, 44, 52-4, 61-3, 70-3; to William I, German Emperor, 60, 100, 103, 108-10, 115-6, 118, 121-6, 132-3, 142-4, 146-7, 150-2, 163-4, 167-9, 172, 181, 183, 202-3, 211-2, 227-8, 248-50, 260, 263; to William II, German Emperor, 272
- Victoria (Princess Royal), Empress Frederick, 20, 79, 85, 87, 111, 118, 135, 142, 171, 173, 175, 181, 183, 194, 197, 202-3, 213, 218, 223-4, 240, 256; her betrothal and marriage, 1, 4, 16, 22-3, 57-69, 94-106, 259; described and discussed by Queen Victoria, 37-9, 49, 59, 59, 64, 73-5; her confirmation, 62; her birthday, 80, 200; and death of Frederick William IV, 114; visits Queen Victoria, 145-7, 166-8, 228, 247; her German sympathies, 148, 162, 176-7; dislikes Bismarck, 158, 195; death of her infant son, 160-2; her kindness to the Empress Eugénie, 178; defends Baron Stockmar, 190; her health, 196; attends her brother's wedding, 234, 236; her bereavements, 264-70; her son's (William II) hostility towards, 271, 274; her death, 278
- Victoria Mary, Duchess of Kent, 79, 91, 111, 116-8, 132, 154
- Victoria and Albert*, 86
- WALKER, General, 182
- Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of, 6, 31-3, 245
- Westmorland, John Fane, eleventh Earl of, 18, 21
- Wilhelmina, Queen of Holland, 85
- William I, Emperor of Germany, 16, 20, 41, 45-6, 96, 118, 187, 206, 221-3, 232, 235, 247-8; his exile, 17-8; becomes Regent, 92, 106; his son's marriage to Princess Royal, 100; and Queen Victoria's first visit to Germany, 102-3; interviews Napoleon III, 112; succeeds to the Throne, 114-5; attempted assassination of, 118-9, 227-30; and wedding of the Prince of Wales, 132; conflict in Prussia, 135, 140-7, 150-2, 159, 163-4, 168, 169; refuses to attend Frankfurt congress, 138; and Princess Frederick's visits to England, 167-8; the Franco-Prussian War, 170-6, 179; conflict with the Church, 198, 200; his wish for peace, 209, 213; the Eastern question, 216-8; his ninetieth birthday, 259; congratulates Queen Victoria on her Jubilee, 262-3; his death, 265
- William II, German Emperor, 1, 104, 152, 201-3, 213, 221-4, 234, 236, 240-1, 249, 260, 267, 269-72, 275, 278
- William IV of England, 205
- Windsor Castle, Queen Victoria's letters from, 5, 15, 18, 23, 27, 34, 37-8, 40-1, 51-2, 58-61, 63, 78-80, 95, 97, 104, 106, 108, 112, 116, 117, 119, 123, 128, 132, 134-5, 142, 146, 150, 153, 159, 163, 166, 174, 180-1, 183, 187-8, 202, 205, 209, 211, 213, 219, 224, 227, 231-2, 235, 241, 243, 248-9, 255, 263, 269, 272
- Wolseley, Lord, 247, 277